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THE

MODERN SABBATH

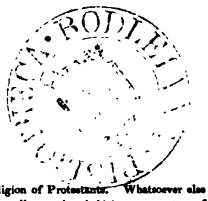
EXAMINED.

E. S.H. 1832

THE

MODERN SABBATH

EXAMINED.



The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it, as a matter of opinion; but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption.

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PREFACE.

THE object of the ensuing treatise is to institute an examination of the arguments usually adduced in support of the doctrine of the perpetuity of the weekly sabbath, under the Christian dispensation. The writer has aimed at pursuing the important inquiry involved in this examination, in the spirit recommended by the immortal Locke, "to bring to our studies, and to our inquiries after knowledge, a mind covetous of truth, that seeks after nothing else, and after that impartially, and embraces it, how poor, how contemptible, how unfashionable soever it may seem;" and he trusts, that by those who may feel disposed to pursue for themselves, the investigation of the sabbatarian question, in the same spirit, the results of his studies, now submitted to their notice, will be found not altogether undeserving of consideration.

It may be requisite to state at the outset, that

the question examined in the following pages, is not the expediency of a periodical intermission of public labour, but the existing obligation of the sabbatical law, viewed as an ordinance of revealed religion. Every one who is sincerely concerned to make the will of Heaven the governing rule of his religious obedience, will, doubtless, readily admit, that to ascertain whether the perpetual observance of a weekly day of rest be really a part of the revealed will of God, is a matter infinitely paramount in importance, to all considerations whatever of mere secular expediency.

It may be proper to premise also, that as the subject has been treated purely on religious grounds, it has been taken for granted, that whatever conclusion relative to it, can be correctly deduced from an accurate survey of scriptural evidence, such conclusion must, in as far as the interests of the Christian religion are concerned, be of all others, ultimately found the most expedient in practice. On the assumption that this proposition is indubitably correct, the principles derived from scriptural authority have been followed into all their natural and necessary consequences, without any anxiety being felt for the issue, as it

respects the interests of true practical piety. The chief business that men have with Christianity, the writer conceives is, to believe what it reveals, and to practise what it enjoins. So soon as it is ascertained what *is* the revealed will of heaven in regard to any point of faith or practice, there is then plainly *that* ascertained which it must be most expedient for men to believe and to obey. As obedience to the revealed will of God comprehends the whole sum of the duty which man owes to his Creator, it is surely warrantable to assume, that the consequences of complying with this rule of duty, may safely be left to Him who has delivered it, and who, in doing so, knew the end from the beginning.

In examining any religious observance which claims our notice, we are very apt to consider, first, *its supposed tendency*, and in this way, to allow the views we form of the results expected to follow from its adoption, to influence, or perhaps determine our conclusions respecting its divine authority and obligation. To pursue this course, is, evidently, much more natural, than *first of all*, to inquire dispassionately, without any regard to anticipated consequences, what actually has been com-

manded. Most men readily admit, that the diffusion of truth must be accompanied with beneficial results, and all naturally wish to have the truth upon *their side:* there appear to be extremely few, however, who adopt the only plan that can ever rationally be expected to conduct them to *the side of truth.* There are comparatively few indeed, who are at all aware of the difficulty that is found, in cultivating a habit of instituting the inquiry, What is true? previous to proceeding to the inquiry, What is expedient? or who have any adequate impression of the importance of carefully observing this order, and invariably adhering to it as a rule, in all their investigations of moral and religious subjects. That it requires constant self-jealousy, and the exercise of a resolute spirit, as well as a firm faith in the unfailing resources of simple truth, habitually to think and act on the conviction that, whatever is true in point of fact, must in every case be found, in the long run, the most expedient as the governing rule of human conduct, no one who has ever made the attempt, honestly, and unwaveringly, to adhere to this conviction, needs to be reminded.

A fair dealing with evidence being at the foundation of all correct thinking on moral and religious subjects, as well as on all others, it is manifest, that it is only by the general cultivation of a love of truth for its own sake, and by a steadfast adherence to it wherever it may conduct us, that the cause of true scriptural religion can ever be expected to make progress in the world: and it is not less plain, that it is by the use of the same means alone, that we can reasonably expect to see the cause of religious error and delusion effectually exposed and overthrown. By free and temperate discussion, carried on in the spirit referred to, truth must advance, and ultimately prevail: and it is certain, that in whatever way the temporary interests of individuals may be affected by the promotion of this great end, in its accomplishment men in general are deeply interested, whether they be willing to acknowledge it or not. That the general diffusion and prevalence of moral and religious truth, must be productive, eventually, of *a greater* amount of real happiness to mankind than the most skilfully constructed system of modified truth and error that ever was devised, cannot for a moment be doubted, without incurring a serious

hazard of being ultimately landed in the dreary regions of universal scepticism. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth upon every subject, is the very life of all manly thought, and independence of character; this alone, the plain truth, pure and unadulterated, free to all, and known by all, is the sole stable source of well-being we can put confidence in, as it regards the permanent prosperity of communities whether civil or religious.

On a subject which has so frequently been handled by writers of celebrity, it is unreasonable now to look for much novelty either in point of matter or illustration. It has been a principal object aimed at by the present writer, carefully to separate that portion of the evidence which is clear and indubitable, from that part which is dubious or merely conjectural; and by bringing forward in this way, a connected series of facts and principles bearing on the question, to enable the reader to draw for himself, from incontrovertible premises, legitimate and satisfactory inferences. In pursuing this undertaking, he has not trusted solely to his own resources, but has availed himself, without scruple, of the researches of former writers, whenever he

found them answerable for his purpose. In the particular track of thought and argument, which, in the present case, has been followed out with a view to elucidate the subject, the author is not aware that he has been preceded by any former writer: and although the same views of the sabbatical ordinance, that are maintained throughout the work, have been taken by various well-known writers, and were common, indeed, to the Christian Church, during the four first centuries, it is not probable, he thinks, that all the conclusions he has attempted to establish, were ever previously maintained precisely on the same grounds.

Having in no instance dealt, designedly, unfairly with evidence, or resorted to sophistical reasoning, he has not felt called upon to exercise any forbearance towards weak, sophistical arguments, employed by others, whenever such arguments came in his way. In venturing to call in question the tenableness of some positions assumed as *established*, by various writers of distinguished reputation, it is hoped he will not be found justly chargeable with any rash and unbeseeming dogmatism. He is not aware that he has advanced a single opinion of any importance,

with confidence, without assigning what he conceives to be a sufficient reason for holding it. If the reasons he *has* assigned can be shown to be futile, or in any way insufficient for the purposes in support of which they have been brought forward, he will, in all sincerity, be greatly pleased to see the fallacies with which they may be chargeable, exposed. Obsolete, and unfashionable, as doubtless, several of the opinions he has contended for, may, correctly enough, at present be deemed, he must be allowed to claim the right of appealing, in their support, from the authority of names and numbers, to the authority of sound reasoning founded on principles derived from the scriptures of truth. That in a treatise, embracing such a wide range of discussion, on a subject of acknowledged difficulty,—a subject, moreover, upon which the most able and learned writers have hitherto differed widely in opinion, he has not in some unessential points, laid himself open to correction, he is not so self-confident as sanguinely to presume. He may be allowed, however, to express it to be his well-weighed, and long-matured conviction, that viewed as a whole, the arguments in disproof of any sabbatical law

under the Christian economy, admit of no solid or satisfactory answer: and he begs to state, that were this not his present conscientious opinion, no known consideration would induce him to allow the following pages to see the light.

He now commends them to the blessing of God, and to the candid reception of the lovers of truth.

CONTENTS.

SEC.		Page
	INTRODUCTION	1
I.	The political regulation of a periodical intermission of public labour, distinguished from the law of the Sabbath viewed as a Divine Institution	5
II.	On the supposed transference of the weekly Sabbath from the Jewish to the Christian economy, at the introduction of the Gospel	35
III.	The Scriptural evidence relative to the existing obligation of the law of the Sabbath further considered.	83
IV.	On the views entertained of the first day of the week, during the first ages of the Christian Church; and on the causes which led to the general adoption of the Modern Sabbatarian Doctrine in England, during the seventeenth century	121
V.	On the practice of using the Judaical Decalogue as the rule of Christian duty	167
VI.	The grounds on which the Modern Sabbath is supposed to rest examined in detail	211
	NOTE	273
	APPENDIX	279

THE

MODERN SABBATH

EXAMINED.

INTRODUCTION.

On all the leading questions connected with the divine institution of a weekly sabbath: concerning the period when the law was first promulgated, concerning its original design, as well as concerning its perpetuity under the christian economy, there has hitherto prevailed amongst religious writers, a wide, and apparently an incurable diversity of opinion. While, by one class of writers, it has been maintained that the sabbath was instituted at the creation, and that its observance having been designed for mankind in general, continues to be binding on all men, in every age of the world; it has been maintained by others, that the institution was originally,

delivered to the Hebrew nation, and that the observance of its rigorous prescriptions was primarily designed to subserve purposes peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation of religion. Those who have adopted the latter view of the ordinance, conceive that the law was promulgated to the Jewish people alone, and was abrogated upon the introduction of the gospel, along with that economy with which it had originally been incorporated.

The controversies that have at different periods been agitated respecting these and some other collateral questions, have usually terminated without any satisfactory determination of the principal points at issue: and although for a considerable time past, there has been an appearance of general acquiescence in that view of the subject, at present publicly maintained in this country, there have transpired of late years numerous indications of a very unsettled state of the public mind upon the subject; and it is well known, that even among religious persons, by whom the duty implied in the prevailing doctrine, is observed, there exists a considerable difference of opinion regarding the real grounds of the religious obligation they profess to recognize.

It cannot reasonably be expected that this diversity of opinion will ever be removed, or that the controversy will ever be brought to a satisfactory issue, so long as the discussion continues to be encumbered, as has heretofore been the case, with

questions of a secular nature, which however important of themselves, rest upon other grounds, and are wholly independent of that scriptural evidence, by which alone the religious question of the existing obligation of the sabbatical law can ever be decisively determined. It seems to be extremely desirable, therefore, that the testimony of scripture respecting the original design and perpetuity of the institution, should be carefully and dispassionately examined, without any reference to the legislative enactments of civil governments. Whatever difference of opinion may have hitherto prevailed respecting the theological question, it may safely be affirmed, that the expediency of intermitting public labour one day in the week, is on all sides readily admitted, and that in no quarter, does there exist any desire to see the existing regulation upon this point, materially altered or repealed.

It is manifest, that apart from all considerations of its religious obligation, the observance of a day of public rest, confers a very valuable privilege on all classes of the community. The regular recurrence of a day of relaxation from the exhausting labours of life, is greatly conducive both to bodily health and to mental vigour: it lightens by the prospect it affords of a temporary cessation of unintermitting application, the burden which the labouring man is obliged daily to bear, while it alleviates the fatigue of all those wearisome avocations

in which the bulk of mankind find it necessary to engage. To all who are thus circumstanced, it is an unspeakable satisfaction to possess the privilege of at all times looking forward *to a point,* at which they may suspend their exertions, and recruit their exhausted powers: it nerves them for vigorous and persevering application to know that the day which they can call their own will shortly return, in which they may again repose from the fatiguing labours of the week, and enjoy endearing intercourse with their families and friends. A day of this kind, it is obvious, affords numerous opportunities, not only for the natural exercise of the social affections and for all the enjoyments of domestic intercourse, but also for mental cultivation, and the diffusion of general as well as religious knowledge: and it cannot be doubted, that if these opportunities be judiciously employed, they must conduce greatly to the progress of society in civilization and in the attainment of every kind of valuable information, as well as to the amelioration of the general condition of the human race.

SECTION I.

THE POLITICAL REGULATION OF A PERIODICAL INTERMISSION OF PUBLIC LABOUR, DISTINGUISHED FROM THE LAW OF THE SABBATH, VIEWED AS A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

THE observance of a weekly day of public rest may be viewed either as a religious ordinance, or as a political regulation. As a religious ordinance, it can derive its existence solely from a revelation of the divine will, and in this point of view, the law, if it exists, must be of indispensable obligation independent of any enactment of civil society. As a political regulation, it has its origin and foundation in the will of the community, and as such, may, without any infringement of the principles of religious liberty, be enforced on all men without regard to their private religious opinions.

It is very desirable that this distinction between the religious and the political character of the law should be accurately understood and constantly kept in view throughout every inquiry into its nature and obligation. To many persons, this, and other questions of a similar nature, naturally appear extremely complicated and confused, on account of

their being habitually viewed, in connexion with the existing regulations of civil society. Owing to the adoption of a form of christianity, as the religion of the state, and the consequent blending together of various civil and religious matters, which ought to have been kept for ever apart,[a] the distinctive cha-

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[a] It is gratifying to notice that the important truth referred to and other truths connected with it, have recently been openly avowed in a quarter, where we should naturally have little expected to see them so distinctly recognized. We refer to a very original and able volume of sermons lately published by Dr. Arnold, Head Master of Rugby School, and late Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. "The christian unity *then*," says this nervous writer, referring to the original state and character of the christian church, as it existed in New Testament times, "was a unity of goodness, an affection of good men for one another, because they mutually loved God. But so soon as this was changed for another sort of unity in which bad men could also be partakers: when christians strove not to put down the principles of the world, but to employ them for the increase of the number of those who were called believers, but who were not so in heart, so soon as they borrowed some of the notions of the law of Moses, and some of those of worldly kingdoms, thinking that they were enlarging the kingdom of God, by persuading Satan's servants merely to change the name of their master without changing the spirit of their worship, then the unity of which St. Paul spoke so earnestly was lost: and men ceased to be one with each other in the Father and the Son. The purpose for which Christ's Church was founded, so far as this world was concerned, the advancement of that kingdom of God, for whose coming we daily pray became presently stopped." "This bears" continues this writer in an appended note, "upon a vast subject, and one of the greatest importance both to the temporal and spiritual advancement of the nations of Europe, *the history of the nominal conversion of the northern nations to christianity*, when they settled themselves in the several provinces of the Roman Empire. The adoption of christianity as the national religion in point of form and profession of opinions, while its spirit and principles were either unknown or hated, *has introduced a confusion into our civil and ecclesiastical relations, under which we are at this present moment labouring*. It has led for instance to the maintenance of these two *inconsistent* propositions by the very same persons:—that the government may interfere in church matters, because in a christian country the

racters of the religious and the political law of the sabbath, appear difficult with precision to be defined. In reality however, they have no real or necessary connexion.

As the government of God and the government of man rest upon different grounds, so have they distinct provinces of legislation; and though the laws of each may agree sometimes in their letter, they differ materially both in their spirit and in the nature of the sanctions by which they are respectively enforced. The foundation of the divine government is to be found in the perfect and unchangeable will of God: human legislation is founded on the principles of natural equity and on those considerations of expediency which every society, in conducting its own concerns, has a right to adopt. All matters of a religious nature, whether of religious belief or of religious duty, belong, as such, to the divine government, and are beyond the cognizance of human legislation. The business of human government is to protect life and property, and to promote the general well-being of the community. Men's actions are the proper subjects of human legislation: their religious belief lies between God and their own consciences.

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government is to be considered as christian, and the king must be a member of the church; and yet that christianity does not meddle with political institutions, with forms of government, questions of public rights, legislation, war and peace, &c., because Christ's kingdom is not of this world."

ARNOLD'S SERMONS, p. 88. 2nd. EDIT. 1830.

It is no where intimated in the New Testament writings, that the christian revelation was designed to aid the nations of the earth in the management of their own affairs, neither does christianity deliver any opinion upon the respective merits of the various systems of political government which different nations have thought it proper to devise. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and its institutions, as delivered in the New Testament, stand wholly apart from all matters of a political nature. Christ indeed taught men to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's: but it is indubitable, that, while christianity thus recognizes civil government itself, as a lawful institution, and an ordinance of heaven which ought to be respected and obeyed, it leaves every separate nation or society, to adopt that particular form of government, and those municipal regulations which, under different circumstances may be found best fitted to promote the general good of the community.

Human legislation being thus founded on considerations of expediency, and its object being simply to advance the general well-being of society, it must be the duty and business of every community to adopt such regulations as are considered most conducive to the real interests of the majority of the people. It is obvious that in every nation at all advanced in civilization, or acquainted in any moderate measure

with the nature and objects of human government, a principal share of the laws will be founded on those principles of natural justice which, as divine laws, are obligatory on all men, independent of any specific enactment either human or divine. As every moral law is from its own nature obligatory on the human conscience, it is manifest that all civil enactments which are founded on the principles of truth and equity, must in one sense be both laws of God and laws of man. All statutes that relate to matters of right and wrong among neighbours, for instance, have a foundation in the moral duty of loving our neighbour as ourselves: and on the principle, that they decide equitably between man and man, are with manifest propriety recognized by the legislature of every civilized nation.

It is to be observed, however, that though laws of this description are in one sense both divine and human, the obedience they respectively require, is enforced by sanctions which differ materially in their nature and operation. The divine government respects the human conscience: it recognizes no obedience which is not voluntarily offered, and its laws are sanctioned, not by present pains and penalties, but by the promise of future rewards, and the threatening of future punishments. As it is utterly impossible to compel the compliance of the heart, man, as the subject of the divine government, can be acted upon only through the medium of his reason

and conscience: the infliction of human penalties may secure an outward conformity with the letter of a law, but it cannot, in the nature of things, procure that willing compliance with the spirit of its precepts which the government of God requires.

The government of man respects overt acts: its design is to lay those restraints on the conduct of individuals which are considered necessary for the protection of the rights of the community, and it makes no laws to which it cannot by physical coercion, infallibly secure an outward obedience.

It may be proper to remark, that the preceding statement of principles, is meant to apply solely to the religion of Christ, as taught in the New Testament writings, and to those systems of human government which recognize the principles of civil and religious freedom. It has no reference to that theocratic government erected among the Jewish nation, in which matters sacred and secular were designedly and inseparably interwoven; the government having been constructed on the principle of comprehending a system of peculiar religious worship and civil polity. Neither is it meant to apply to those modern systems of civil and ecclesiastical dominion, in which a particular form of religion is established and supported by secular enactments, and made use of as an instrument in accomplishing the purposes of the executive government: and under which, a right of coercion,

even in spiritual matters, is claimed over all who are within the limits of its assumed jurisdiction. Christianity disowns every system of this kind, by whatever name it may be called, and expressly refuses the proffered aid of every kind of worldly influence, as well as the support of all the secular enactments of the kingdoms of this world.[b] It recognizes those individuals only to be its subjects, whose consciences are in subjection to the authority of Christ: and as its laws can be obeyed only from a principle of love, it is impossible that a compliance with them can be compelled by any coercive power on earth.

The assumption of a right, indeed, by ecclesiastical bodies, to legislate for men in spiritual matters, and of a power to enforce religious decrees by compulsory enactments, resolves itself into a government purely secular in its character: for by whatever name these bodies may be designated, so soon as the attempt is made to employ the sanction of physical coercion, their nature is determined and ascertained to be distinctly worldly and political. There is no medium between the principle of force, which is the foundation of political power, and that moral influence which is the sole instrument that can be exerted on man as a rational, accountable being, the subject of the divine government.

In those countries in which a religious sect has

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[b] John xxiii. 36 & 37.

been established by law, and its religious forms incorporated with the civil government, although the legislature may enact statutes professedly of a religious nature, it can only enforce them by such compulsory penalties as entirely annihilate their spiritual character. The observance of a weekly day of public rest, for instance, no doubt had its origin, as a municipal regulation of this country, in religious motives: but though it was probably viewed by the civil legislature, at the period of its enactment, as a religious obligation, it is utterly impossible that it can ever be enforced as a religious duty by the sword of the civil magistracy. As a law of the land, the obedience it requires can be compelled by the infliction of the same penalties which secure the observance of any other enactment: it is clear however, that no infliction of penalties can secure more than an outward obedience to the injunction of a cessation from public labour. The authority of the magistrate extends to every overt act which violates the laws of the state, or disturbs the peace of society, but it cannot be brought to bear on the human conscience. It is manifest therefore, that it is only as a municipal regulation, that the observance of a day of public rest can ever be enforced by the civil power.

There is, thus, a broad and palpable distinction between the observance of a day of rest, viewed as a religious ordinance, and viewed as a municipal

regulation: and it is obvious that the one law has no necessary connexion with the other. If the observance of a weekly sabbath be a religious ordinance of divine appointment, men unquestionably owe it obedience from a regard to divine authority: but whether or not this be a divine commandment, so long as a cessation from public labour is commanded by the civil legislature, men are unquestionably bound to comply with the observance, as the law of the land. If there exists, under the Christian economy, any obligation to sanctify a determinate portion of time, the disciples of Christ are bound to recognize it, independent of all secular enactments whatever: the existence of an obligation of this kind, however, (supposing for a moment that such an obligation does really exist,) cannot possibly take away the right of society to adopt the regulation of enforcing the observance of a day of public rest, if the regulation be considered conducive to the well-being of the community. To determine certain days and hours for public labour, is a duty which every enlightened and humane legislature will always consider it to be its bounden business to discharge: and so long as it may seem convenient and advantageous to society, to intermit public labour a whole day in every seven, there can be no reasonable objection advanced against the adoption of such a regulation, or to its general enforcement by magisterial authority. That the expediency

of the regulation is the only tenable ground on which, as a law of man, the observance of a day of rest can ever with consistency be placed, seems thus to be alike clear and indubitable: it is only in fact, as a political regulation, that men, as members of civil society, are concerned with the matter: as a religious obligation, it lies between God and their own consciences.

There have been some writers however, who while they admit that it is not within the province of civil government to ordain that every person should exercise himself in the duties of religion on the sabbath day, have maintained, that it is nevertheless the bounden and sacred duty of civil governors to provide, that all persons should on that day, have the liberty, means, and opportunity of doing so. These writers maintain that the civil legislature is warranted *in assuming the religious obligation* of keeping a sabbath, and in assuming also the common consent of christians respecting it: these assumptions, they conceive, may reasonably be made the ground and reason of a civil enactment.

It is to be observed, however, that if the assumptions referred to, be expressed in the statute: if they be assigned as the ground of its enactment, and as the reason for its being enforced, it will be difficult to justify the law on the principles of sound government, or to defend it from the charge of infringing on the rights of private conscience. The introduction of a

religious doctrine into a political enactment, and an assumption that all the members of the state recognize the obligation implied in it, seem to be inconsistent alike with the principles of religious freedom, and with all correct views of the nature and objects of civil legislation. Concerning the doctrine of the perpetuity of the sabbath, from which is derived the obligation which, in this case, is proposed to form the ground and reason of a civil statute, there has hitherto existed a great difference of opinion: and it seems to be very improbable, that with a controverted religious question like this, men, as members of civil society should have any legitimate concern.

In every free government, where there are no civil distinctions made on account of men's different religious opinions, it must be alike unjust and inconsistent, to assume the obligation of a controverted religious doctrine as a proper reason for the enactment of a civil statute. It is obvious that every member of the state, who dissents from the doctrine on which this obligation is founded, has a just reason of complaint, that he is called upon to give his consent to the enactment of a law, which implies the existence of a religious doctrine to which he is conscientiously opposed. To ground the law of the sabbath as a political regulation upon an antecedent religious obligation, would not be felt to be any grievance, so long as all the members of the state admitted the existence of this obligation, (although even then, the

legislature would appear to be transgressing the limits of its legitimate jurisdiction,) but so soon as any individual member of the state dissented from the doctrine on which this obligation was founded, the ground on which the law rested, would, as regarded him, be wholly subverted, and the enactment would necessarily become an odious interference with the rights of private conscience.

Every person has just grounds of complaint, who is precluded as a citizen of a particular community, from exercising his allotted share in the formation of the laws of the state, unless he submit to a compromise of his religious principles. A legislative body calling itself a protestant parliament, may indeed assume the antecedent religious obligations of *the protestant sabbath,* with some colour of consistency; but to assume this obligation, and to assign it as a valid reason for enacting a municipal regulation, in a country where religious distinctions are professedly abolished, is to do a manifest injustice to every Roman Catholic member of the legislature, and to every other member of it, who dissents from the doctrine, on which, the assumed obligation is founded. It is no doubt true, that every system of civil government, which, while it professes to recognize the rights of private conscience, undertakes to provide not only for the support of a particular religious sect, (and what are the churches of Rome and England, and other similar bodies, but particular

sects, that is, sections or divisions of the professedly christian community?) but also to legislate in spiritual matters for its adherents, must necessarily be chargeable with numerous glaring inconsistencies: for these inconsistencies, however, the principles of civil and religious freedom are in no degree answerable. It is apart altogether from every erroneous, incongruous system of this kind that we contend, that on the principles of an equality of civil rights, and the removal of all civil distinctions on account of men's religious opinions, it must be wholly inconsistent to place the secular enactment which enjoins the observance of a day of public rest, on any other foundation than its recognized expediency. To attempt to increase the authority and stability of the law, as some persons have endeavoured to do, by refusing to recognize the expediency of the regulation as its proper foundation, and to substitute a religious doctrine, as the proper ground on which it ought to rest, is obviously to remove it from a foundation of rock, and to place it on one of sand.

The world has been slow to learn the plain but important truth, that men's actions, and not men's opinions, are the proper subjects of human legislation. As the object of civil government is simply to protect the rights and to promote the temporal well-being of society, all that the civil legislature has to do with religion, is merely to protect from molestation every member of the state, in the exercise of his own con-

victions of religious duty, so long as the exercise of this duty does not interfere with the peace and security of the community. On the other hand, the disciples of Christ require nothing of the civil legislature but that which, as citizens, they have a right to demand: namely the protection of their lives, their properties, and privileges as members of the community: and it is only indeed *as members of civil society, and not in any religious capacity,* that christians ought ever to interfere in questions of *a political nature.* It would have been well for the cause of religious truth, as well as for the cause of civil and religious freedom, if these principles had been sooner recognized by civil governments, and by the professors of the christian name. Many well-meaning persons appear to have yet to learn, that the religion of Christ peremptorily refuses the proffered support of all the governments of this world: and that to attempt to establish it by human legislation, is to convert it into a state religion, one of the worst of all political engines.

There are some persons, however, who though they are decidedly opposed to the incorporation of any form of christianity with civil governments, and profess to be warmly attached to the principles of religious liberty, refuse to follow these principles into all their natural and necessary consequences in as far as the sabbath is concerned. On this subject they seem afraid and unwilling to carry their own system con-

sistently into operation; and, by attempting to compromise the matter, and to identify the sabbatical law with duties of a moral nature, they involve themselves in innumerable perplexities and apparent difficulties, which have no foundation, save their own groundless fears and imaginations. They conceive, that the sabbath is a legitimate subject for human legislation;—that the institution, in its very nature, requires the concurrence of the magistrate, being, in part, a political institution, having relation to man as the subject of human government:—that, as there is a law of property antecedent to all the provisions of specific statutes, which says, 'Thou shalt not steal,'—a law which human authority may enforce, but cannot reverse, so there is a law of the sabbath, which, being founded, as they suppose, on eternal moral obligations, neither church nor state can originate or set aside. They conceive, that were it otherwise, the National Assembly of France committed no crime, when they set aside the hebdomadal division of time, and adopted a computation by decades.

The necessity which, by these persons, is supposed to exist for the recognition by civil governments of the sabbatical institution, rests wholly, it is to be observed, on the assumption, that their own view of the moral and universal obligation of the law of the sabbath, is incontrovertibly established. That this law however, is a moral duty at all, or that it is *now*

founded on eternal moral obligations, are pure gratuitous assertions, which, in the judgment of many persons, it is impossible satisfactorily to prove.

We are unable to perceive that there exists any proper reason for the civil legislature intermeddling with this, or with any similar religious dispute: neither can we discover any difficulty whatever in the case, if matters are simply allowed to remain on their respective, proper, and only tenable footings; namely, the religious obligation, if it exists, on the testimony of scripture; and the municipal regulation of intermitting public labour, on the broad principle of acknowledged general expediency.

That the civil power is under an obligation to recognize the existence of any one positive religious law under the christian dispensation, is a proposition destitute of all colour of rational probability, and as we hope in the sequel to show, of all legitimate scriptural proof. The appointment of a determinate portion of time to be sanctified to God's worship and service, is a duty, it is to be remembered, which can derive its obligation solely from the promulgation of an express precept: and, consequently, the duty itself is of a positive, and not of a moral nature. There is an important difference, therefore, between the nature of the law of the sabbath, and the nature of the divine law forbidding theft—and of every other divine law, which, like it, is essentially moral in its nature, being founded on the

principles of natural and immutable moral obligation.

It is readily admitted, that no human power, whether of the church or state, can originate or set aside a divine institution: whether, however, a weekly sabbath continues, under the christian dispensation, *to be* a divine institution, has hitherto been a matter of "doubtful disputation," on which it seems very unnatural to think, that civil governments ought to be called upon to deliver an opinion. Those persons who consider the observance of a sabbath to be still a divine obligation are no doubt bound, even if the notions they entertain be incorrect, to act on their own convictions of personal duty: but it seems to be extremely unwarrantable for such persons to obtrude their private views of religious obligation on the civil legislature; and to insist, that "it involves a moral wrong" to decline the recognition of their theological dogma.

It is very incorrect to represent the refusal of the civil power to recognize the obligation of this controverted doctrine, as a national crime—as setting the eternal laws of God at defiance. It is manifest that representations of this kind, however alarming they may prove to men of weak and timid minds, are altogether groundless and imaginary, being founded on the gross fallacy of taking for granted a principal point at issue in the religious controversy; namely, that the law of the sabbath is a duty moral in its nature.

They who can acquiesce in the extraordinary dogma that one portion of time is more holy *in its nature* than another, are no doubt at perfect liberty to act on their own convictions of religious truth and duty: but it seems very unreasonable, that this apparently incredible notion should be forced upon others, whose minds, it may be, are too logically constructed to allow them to acquiesce in its accuracy; and it seems to be especially unreasonable, that civil governments should be called upon to acknowledge its correctness and obligation, on the penalty of being denounced as vile Atheists, who presume to oppose the eternal moral laws of the Deity.

The error of confounding people's own interpretation of the law of duty, with the law itself, and of condemning, on the ground of this private interpretation, every action of others, which is not sanctioned by it, constitutes the very essence of intolerance, and has long been the fruitful source of innumerable forms of unchristian usurpation and spiritual oppression. It is a gross fallacy to represent the law "Thou shalt not steal," and an injunction to sanctify a determinate portion of time, as laws alike eternal and immutable in their obligation. The former is a moral duty, being founded on the nature of things, and its obligation is recognized by the human conscience independent of any specific enactment. The latter is termed a positive law,

because it derives its obligation wholly from the promulgation of an express precept. The one is commanded because it is right, the other is right solely because it is commanded.

This distinction between the positive character of the law of the sabbath, and the moral nature of all laws founded on the principles of the love of God and our neighbour, is one of the principal points on which the controversy regarding the perpetuity of the sabbatical law hinges: and existing as it does, in the nature of things, unless it be clearly apprehended and constantly kept in view, it is impossible that the relation in which the institution stands to human governments can be accurately understood. It is no doubt true, that no human authority can reverse the divine law prohibiting theft, neither can human authority reverse the law of the sabbath if it be actually in force *now,* as a law of heaven: but it does not follow from this, that "it involves a moral wrong," to set aside the observance of a weekly day of rest as a municipal regulation. It would undoubtedly involve a moral wrong to attempt to reverse any moral precept whatever: but this is a very different matter from civil governments declining to recognize the obligation of a religious ordinance *not moral* in its nature, and the very existence of which is the subject of an apparently interminable theological dispute. We cannot conceive it possible, in the nature of things, that a single duty of a moral kind

can be reversed by any authority human or divine; it is incontrovertible, however, that the same authority which enacted a positive precept, is competent at any time to repeal it. It is obvious, that even as regards moral precepts, the civil legislature does not consider itself bound to adopt, or formally recognize, *every duty* of this nature—it adopts merely that portion of them, the enforcement of which is considered conducive to furthering the great object of human government, namely, the general well-being of the community. The law "Thou shalt not steal," for instance, and other precepts of a similar nature, are adopted by every civilized nation, simply on account of their deciding equitably between man and man, and because their enforcement is found necessary to the general protection of life and property.

All civil laws that have their foundation in the principles of immutable equity, exist both as laws of God and as laws of man: the obedience, however, which these laws respectively require, is very different in its nature and extent. The human law "Thou shalt not steal" being simply a restraint on individual aggression, consists in specific prohibitions, and so long as an external obedience is rendered to it, a person is exempted from the penalty annexed to its violation. In the judgment of the divine law, however, every one is a violator of its injunctions who cherishes the desire of defrauding his neighbour. The law of man is incompetent to take cognizance of men's secret

intentions, and proceeds on the evidence of overt acts: it presumes every one to be innocent until he be convicted of external disobedience. The law of God, on the other hand, proceeds on an infallible knowledge of men's inward dispositions, and thus reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Now, though a law enjoining a weekly day of rest differs in nature from the injunction which forbids the commission of theft, because, not being founded on the principles of natural equity, it is a law of a positive and not of a moral nature; it is no doubt conceivable, that such a law may also exist, both as a law of God and as a law of man. The adoption of a regulation of this kind by the civil power, must however, as has already been remarked, be wholly a matter of option and expediency.

We conceive then that, as the law of the sabbath is a precept of a positive, and not of a moral nature, there can be no moral wrong involved, in a national legislature declining to recognize its existence and obligation. The only obligation that can attach to civil governments, to adopt the regulation of a periodical intermission of public business, must arise from the adaptation of the regulation to the general convenience and interests of the community. The judgment of the legislature upon these points, appears to be the only tenable footing, on which a municipal law of this nature can ever consistently be placed.

It is deserving of remark, that the observance of Sunday in this country, seems to have been viewed by the early English Reformers as being simply an expedient regulation. "We observe the sundays," says Cranmer, in his Catechism published in 1588, "and certain other days, as the magistrates do judge convenient, whom in this thing we ought to obey." Tindal was of opinion that it devolved on christians themselves, "to appoint every seventh or every tenth day to be a day of rest, as they found most convenient." At the period of the Reformation, this view of the subject seems generally to have prevailed. Calvin, it is well known, entertained these sentiments, and proposed at one time to transfer the observance from Sunday to Thursday, assigning as his reason for wishing to make the change, that it would be a proper instance of christian liberty.

That the original law of the sabbath is "essentially a national ordinance," and that "it requires the concurrence of the civil power to secure its proper observance," appear to be propositions indubitably correct. To all, however, who understand the nature of Christ's kingdom as distinguished from the kingdom of Israel, (in which its spiritual character and blessings were, through earthly figures, adumbrated,) as well as from all the governments of this world, this very circumstance of the institution being essentially political in its nature, must appear to furnish a very powerful *presumptive* evidence in disproof of its perpetuity

under the christian dispensation. The law of the sabbath was delivered to the Hebrew nation, as "a kingdom of priests," placed under a theocratic government, and separated to God's exclusive service; the observance of the letter of the law—of its minutest prescriptions, was enforced by the same fearful sanctions which were annexed to the crimes of blasphemy and idolatry.

Though there have been various systems of civil and ecclesiastical government devised by men, in imitation of this peculiar system of religious worship and civil polity, instituted by Jehovah himself, these various systems have been all bad imitations of an original that was never designed to serve as a model for civil governments to copy. It may comport with the nature and policy of human governments, founded on this erroneous principle, to incorporate the positive ordinances of revealed religion, with their secular enactments, and to legislate on religious matters for the general community: but all systems of this kind are disowned alike by the old covenant of Moses, and by the new covenant, which has been ratified by the death of the Messiah. Christ's kingdom, it is ever to be remembered, "is not of this world," and its laws are designed for those persons only who are its real and spiritual subjects.

To all by whom these important truths are accurately conceived of, and followed into all their natural and necessary consequences, it must appear to be

very improbable, that any religious ordinance should have been appointed under the christian dispensation, which requires the concurrence of the civil power to render it practicable. It is obvious, however, that if the law of the sabbath continues binding on Christ's disciples, they are necessarily dependent on the concurrence of the governments of this world, for the due performance of a religious duty of indispensable obligation. "The institution of the weekly sabbath," says Paley, "is so connected with the functions of civil life, and requires so much the concurrence of the civil law in its regulation and support, that it cannot perhaps be made the ordinance of any religion, till that religion be made the religion of the state." Now as it was not intended that the religion of Christ should, at any time, be made the religion of the state, it is manifest that though the observance of the sabbath was perfectly practicable by the inhabitants of Judea, for whom it was originally designed, its strict observance must always have been very incompatible with the varied circumstances of Christ's disciples, chosen out of the nations of the earth, and scattered over the whole world.

It is not proposed to adduce at present, considerations of this kind, as furnishing any conclusive evidence in disproof of the existence of the sabbatical law, under the christian economy; when it is advanced, however, by those who themselves profess to be opposed to state religions, that the institution "is

essentially a national ordinance," with a view of shewing that civil governments are bound to recognize its obligation, we may be allowed to suggest, that in this view, its observance can be generally practicable in those countries only, where systems of national christianity have been established—systems all fundamentally at variance with the spiritual character of the christian religion.

It is possible to conceive, indeed, that the law of the sabbath may retain its obligation under the christian dispensation, independent of the concurrence of the civil power: for the disciples of Christ have been taught to expect opposition and various difficulties in following the path of commanded duty. There is no evidence, however, that the harassing inconvenience and serious sacrifice of worldly property which inevitably would have been incurred, by the performance of this duty, in every country where sunday was not observed as a day of public rest, have been constituted a part of that cross which christians are called upon to bear. Those persons who hold the doctrine of the perpetuity of the sabbatical law, ought, undoubtedly, to be very thankful when they are placed in circumstances, where the duty implied in this doctrine can be performed without personal loss or inconvenience. It is certain, that none of the followers of Christ possessed the same opportunities during the three first centuries of the christian era: so that if the existing law of the land upon the sub-

ject were now to be repealed, (an event greatly to be deprecated,[c]) the observers of a weekly sabbath would not be placed under more trying circumstances than were those of all the disciples of Christ, in every part of the world, anterior to the period when Constantine established the observance of sunday as a weekly religious festival throughout the Roman Empire. The opportunity which the law of the country at present affords for the observance of a weekly sabbath, does not, however, change the nature of the political regulation—a regulation founded, as has been shewn, on considerations of expediency: and it is obvious, on the other hand, that if this privilege were now withdrawn, the obligation to observe this day as a law of heaven, supposing such a law to be in force, would continue unimpaired.

It is very desirable that the religious question of the existing obligation of the sabbath, should be examined without reference to any civil enactments whatever. Owing to the incorporation of the sabbatical law with the common law of the country, there exists in various quarters much confusion of thought regarding the real grounds of its religious obligation, and, in conjunction with this, a natural prejudice in favour both of the existing regulation of a weekly cessation of public labour, and of the religious opinion with which it is usually associated. In all our investigations of scriptural evidence, our conclu-

[c] See Appendix.

sions are apt to be materially influenced by the state of mind we bring to the inquiry. In questions like this especially, of an apparently mixed nature, when the mind is pre-occupied with a strong feeling in favour of a municipal regulation of manifest expediency, it is very natural to transfer this feeling to a particular scriptural conclusion: at all events, there is less chance than usual of the evidence relative to the question being examined with that dispassionate impartiality which it is so desirable to carry into all our investigations of moral and religious subjects. In no case, indeed, is it possible to ascertain the actual extent to which the natural prejudice arising from our preconceived opinions, is allowed to influence our judgment in the examination of all collateral questions. This much is abundantly clear, that while the bulk of professing christians acknowledge the scriptures to be the only rule of their faith and practice, it is usual for them to consult this authority, more with a design to discover evidence in support of the opinions they have already adopted, than with the real desire of ascertaining what truths have actually been revealed, and what opinions they ought consequently to adopt.

If we wish to examine the sabbatarian question, as a matter of religious obligation, which is unquestionably the most important light in which it can be regarded, it is to be kept in mind, that the inquiry is not at all about the expediency of any existing

regulation of society, but concerning the perpetuity of the sabbatical institution under the christian economy. The question is not, Is the established regulation of observing a weekly day of rest expedient as a law of man? The sole question with which we are concerned is this, Is it true that the law of the sabbath is now in force as a law of heaven? This question, it is manifest, can be satisfactorily answered only by the production of legitimate scriptural evidence.

The agitation of this question, we are aware, has frequently been deprecated, on the ground that it would be dangerous to the interests of christian piety to unsettle the public mind upon the subject: all apprehensions of this kind, however, we regard to be wholly imaginary and groundless. To apprehend any danger to the cause of true christianity, from temperate and fair discussion, seems to indicate suspicions unworthy of a religion that rests upon the basis of satisfactory evidence and conclusive argument. The disciples of Christ have been enjoined "to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good;" and whatever reasons the adherents of religious systems that are indebted for their support to the prevalence of popular ignorance and credulity, may have, for deprecating discussion, the cause of true religion cannot possibly sustain any permanent injury from an unsparing examination of all its doctrines, or from the elucidation and establishment of scriptural

truth. It is high time that all the professors of the christian name should abandon every appearance of collusion *with pious frauds.*

Christianity has suffered sufficiently from this quarter, in past ages, and it now courts unfettered discussion, and the most scrutinizing inquiry into all its merits and pretensions. It appeals from every mistaken judgment which men have passed on its claims, from their having viewed its character through the medium of worldly appearances, and the injudicious representations of its professed advocates, to its legitimate evidence and real pretensions, as contained in the scriptures of truth. The greatest good that can be wished for the religion of Christ, is, that men would take it into their own hands, and examine its character, and the intelligence it communicates, as matters in which they are personally, deeply interested. The cause of true christianity is satisfied to stand on its own merits, and disowns all connivance with the false and hollow support of traditional superstitions and worldly appendages of men's devising.

SECTION II.

ON THE SUPPOSED TRANSFERENCE OF THE WEEKLY SABBATH FROM THE JEWISH TO THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY, AT THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL.

THE principal point relative to the divine institution of a weekly sabbath, which it is of practical importance to ascertain, is comprised in two leading questions:—

First.—Whether the law was delivered to the Jewish people alone, and was designed to terminate at the dissolution of the Hebrew commonwealth: or—

Secondly.—Whether at the introduction of the Gospel it was transferred to the disciples of Christ.

Amongst modern writers on both sides of this question, the opinion seems to have prevailed, that in order to ascertain the existing obligation of the sabbatical law, it was necessary, first of all, to ascertain the period at which the divine command was originally given. This opinion has led them accordingly to represent the inquiry relative to the period at which the law was first promulgated, as comprising the main point on which the controversy hinges.

It has been supposed, that if the divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, to be binding upon all men, in every age of the world:—that if, on the other hand the law was first promulgated to the Jewish nation in the wilderness, as it must then have been directed to the Jewish people alone, something further, either in the subject or circumstances of the command will be necessary, to prove that it now retains its obligation under the christian economy.

Those who hold the former opinion, interpret the passage in the second chapter of Genesis, in which the mention of the sabbath first occurs, as recording the original promulgation of the law; and suppose that, as the observance of the sabbath was thus appointed at the creation, it must have been designed to be binding on the head of the human family, and on all his descendants.

On the opposite side, it has been maintained, that it is not said in the passage in Genesis referred to, that God sanctified the seventh day *at that time:* that the sacred historian mentions merely *the reason* why the seventh day was hallowed: namely, because on it, God rested "from all his work which he created and made." Those who have adopted this view of the passage, conceive that, although at first sight, it may seem improbable that the sanctification of the seventh day should have been mentioned if it had

not then been appointed, it is to be borne in mind that Moses was not writing for the instruction and obedience of Adam and the patriarchs, but for the Jewish nation, to whom, as they had received a command to keep holy a weekly sabbath, it was natural, in recording the creation in six days, to mention that this was one of the events which their observance of a weekly sabbath was designed to commemorate.

There seems to have been, on both sides, a greater importance attached to this part of the question than necessarily, or even properly, belongs to it. The period at which the sabbatical law was first promulgated, is a matter of fact, which, with all other matters of fact, can be ascertained only by competent testimony: as there exists no direct precept or undoubted example from which it can be inferred, that the law was in force, anterior to its promulgation to the Jewish nation, the opinion that it was observed during the patriarchal ages, must necessarily be regarded as a mere conjecture which admits of no satisfactory proof. It seems at all events, therefore, to be very rash and unjustifiable to deduce from a *supposed command* given to Adam, the important conclusion, that the law is addressed to the human species alike, and retains its obligation during every period of time: and it seems also to be extremely rash to found on an assumption of this nature a general theory; and then to proceed to make every subsequent part of the scriptural account

of sabbatical institutions, quadrate with this preconceived opinion.

Instead of beginning at this part of the question, or of forming any positive opinion about a matter of fact, which, as it has not been recorded, cannot now be satisfactorily ascertained, it seems to be a far safer and more satisfactory course, to begin at the scriptural evidence, which exists concerning the relation in which the sabbath stands to the christian dispensation; and endeavour, in this way, first of all, correctly to ascertain the view of the institution that was entertained by the apostles of Christ, when they set up "the kingdom of heaven" in the world. It is not matter of conjecture or uncertainty that the seventh day was sanctified throughout Judea in obedience to the prescriptions of the fourth commandment, at the period of the introduction of the Gospel: if then we can ascertain from the New Testament writings, whether or not this commandment was transferred to Christ's disciples, we are more likely to learn correctly the mind and will of God upon the matter, by acquiescing at once in authoritative evidence of this kind, than by indulging in speculations and conjectures about the unrecorded religious practices of the antediluvian and patriarchal ages of the world. It is no doubt recorded, that God rested from his works on the seventh day, but it is to be remembered, that it is the precepts and not the example of God which constitute the rule of human

duty. It is certainly quite conceivable also, that some sabbatical institution may have been observed anterior to the time of Moses; but though this were much more probable than it is, it does not seem necessarily to follow, that the religious practices of that early dispensation of religion, constitute any authoritative precedent binding upon the subjects of the kingdom of heaven. It is not the uncertain practices of the patriarchs, but the things which Christ has commanded, which Christians have been enjoined to observe.

It appears, indeed, to be perfectly preposterous to seek for information regarding the rule of christian obedience, in the scanty records that have been transmitted to us of the religious practices of the first ages of the world. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake of old unto the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken in these latter days by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. It is His voice which men are now called upon to hearken to, and to obey. The former word of prophecy has now received its verification and fulfilment in the advent and work of the Messiah; and we are informed by the apostle Peter, that the writings of these Old Testament prophets, many of which were designedly obscure and incomplete, are not to be interpreted alone, nor by mere human ingenuity and conjecture, but only as explained and confirmed by the clear and

completed revelation of Christ and his apostles. Christ is now declared to be "the head of all government and power": the disciples of Christ are not placed under the authority of Moses, nor under the authority of any human lawgiver, in any matter of religious obedience: one is their master even the Messiah, and his authority alone they are commanded to regard.

It must be laid down then as the leading principle, on which all correct views of the nature and extent of christian obligation have their foundation, that the revealed will of Christ is the sole authoritative rule of christian duty. It is superfluous to state, that this will embraces the eternal rule of morality, comprehended in the principles of the love of God and our neighbour: to ascertain, however, what religious institutions or duties of a positive nature, are obligatory under the christian economy, it is necessary to consult the New Testament writings, which furnish the only authentic record of the commandments of Christ, and of the obedience rendered to them by those who acted under the authoritative direction of Christ's apostles. By passing over, then, every preconceived theory, as well as all the different systems of religious discipline which the various denominations of the professedly christian world have adopted, and by placing ourselves in the situation of the first christians, who acted under the direction of the apostles, when they established the kingdom of

heaven in the world, we are most likely to obtain an accurate view of that evidence relative to the existing obligation of the sabbath, which alone is to be regarded as decisive upon the subject.

It is to be remembered, that the kingdom of heaven was not established in the world, until Christ had finished the work that had been assigned to him: and it is evident, that previous to that period, the apostles themselves entertained many very mistaken conceptions regarding his true character, as well as the nature and object of his mission. Though a considerable portion of the personal instructions of Jesus, in his intercourse with his disciples, respected these important subjects, their true meaning "was hid from them, and they comprehended it not, till after that Christ was risen from the dead." "I have yet" said he, "many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He the spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth."[d] The gospel of the kingdom announced by Jesus during his ministry among men, was only, that the kingdom of heaven *was at hand*, and it was not until this kingdom was actually established by his death and resurrection, that the good news were really published of Jesus being the promised and true Messiah, the Son of the living God. Then it first was, that the glad tidings of pardon and peace through Him,

[d] John xvi. 12.

were freely and fully proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

We are informed, that after Jesus had risen from the dead, and had convinced his disciples of his resurrection, he communicated to them various instructions, regarding the nature of his kingdom, and regarding its promotion and establishment in the world. When about to ascend to the throne of this kingdom, He, in the exercise of that power over all things in heaven and on earth that had been given him, delivered to his apostles this commission—"Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In the execution of this charge, the apostles went forth proclaiming the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus, making known the extent of his power as the risen Saviour, and publishing to all men, the free forgiveness of sin through his name.

It is to be observed, that this commission was primarily addressed to the apostles, who all possessed peculiar qualifications for its execution; and who all, too, as the authoritative ambassadors of Christ, carried about with them, in the power of working miracles, the credentials of their divine embassy. These apostles had all "seen the Lord," and were thus competent, as eye and ear witnesses of the

facts they made known, to testify them satisfactorily to the world. They were also divinely qualified for their office, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who "taught them all things," bringing all things to their remembrance "whatsoever Christ had said unto them." Being "guided into all truth," and "showed things to come," the apostles were thus divinely constituted, *authoritative teachers of christianity*, and in this capacity, *they have had no successors.* They were inspired to interpret infallibly the meaning of the Old Testament writings, and were also authorized and qualified to instruct all those whom they made disciples, in the knowledge of every doctrine, and in the observance of every duty pertaining to the kingdom of heaven.

It is to the apostles of Christ then, that christians have now to look for a satisfactory knowledge of the nature and extent of the obedience required of them. The will of God is the sole rule of christian duty; and what that will is, we learn from these authoritative ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven. The testimony which they have committed to writing, is the same as that of Christ himself; so that his impressive declaration, when on earth, remains still in force. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."[e] All those

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[e] Luke x. 16.

who are "of the truth," and "who have an ear to hear Christ's voice,"[f] are represented in the scriptures as giving a peculiar attention to every thing that He or his apostles have said. In every instance in which the human mind is impressed with the divine evidence of the gospel of salvation, there is awakened a new sense of obligation and allegiance to Christ, which is manifested by an unhesitating compliance with every known duty. Jesus himself has expressly declared, that they only are his disciples who do the things which he has commanded: and that this disposition is the great and sole unerring test of all genuine christian affection. "If any man love me, he will keep my words:" "he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings."[g]

It must plainly be the duty therefore, of every one who professes allegiance to Christ, to regard supremely his authority in all matters of faith and practice; to believe whatever his apostles have revealed, and to practise whatever they have enjoined. Whatever Christ or his apostles taught, or whatever the first christians practised under their authoritative direction, constitutes an obligation on christians in every succeeding age. The New Testament writings thus form a perpetual rule of directory for the personal obedience and social practices of Christ's followers, sufficient for all the practical

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[f] John xxiii. 27. [g] John xiv. 23, 24.

purposes of the christian life; and this rule alone, we conceive, every private christian, and every single society of christians, ought stedfastly to follow.

It is by this decisive test that we now purpose briefly to examine the modern doctrine of a christian sabbath; and it will at once be perceived, that the sole question with which we are concerned, is this;—Was the doctrine that "ever since the resurrection of Christ, God has appointed the first day of the week to continue to the end of the world to be the christian sabbath,"[h] a doctrine recognized or taught by Christ's apostles?

That the view which the apostles took of the sabbatical institution, when setting up the kingdom of God in the world, was in accordance with the will of heaven, is not for a moment to be questioned. It is to be remembered, that at the period of the first publication of the gospel, immediately subsequent to Christ's resurrection, the seventh day of the week was observed throughout Judea in obedience to the fourth commandment. Whether then, was this sabbatical observance viewed by the apostle as an integral part of the Jewish constitution, and as standing or falling with the other ordinances of the Mosaic economy: or, as a divine institution, which was designed to retain its obligation under the gospel dispensation? These are, evidently, the points on

[h] Westminster Assembly's Catechism.

which it is the most requisite that we should arrive at a correct and satisfactory decision in the inquiry which it has been proposed to institute.

There were two different lines of conduct, either of which it is conceivable the apostles may have pursued in reference to this matter. They may have taught the christian converts, that the weekly sabbath was a national observance, which the Jewish believers of the gospel were bound, as members of the Hebrew commonwealth, to obey; though all christians *as such,* and consequently, all those christian converts who had not formerly been Jews, were exempted from its obligation: or, they may have taught them the modern doctrine, that the duties prescribed in the fourth commandment, were transferred to the first day of the week, and with this alteration were to retain their obligation on the followers of Christ until the end of the world. It is certain that it must have been well known to the early believers of the gospel which of these courses the apostles were instructed to adopt. Those of them especially, who had not previously kept a sabbath at all, must have positively known, whether or not such an observance formed a part of "the things which Christ had commanded." It is manifest indeed, that a religious practice like this, which interferes so much with the usual arrangements and avocations of life, must, if enjoined on the Gentile converts, have been well known not only to them, but to all around them who took any notice of

their religious obedience. On the supposition therefore, that the first day of the week was at that time observed as a holy sabbath, we should naturally expect to find some indications of its regular recurrence; if no trace whatever of such an observance is to be found, we may be led eventually to conclude, that the sanctification of the first day of the week in obedience to the fourth commandment, forms no part of that revealed will of God, which constitutes the sole rule of christian obedience.

The question of the existing obligation of the law of the sabbath, thus resolves itself into a simple matter of fact, which can be ascertained only by legitimate testimony. If we can ascertain from any recorded precept or example, that at the introduction of the gospel, the sabbath which previously had been kept by the Jewish people, was transferred to the first day of the week, and made obligatory on Christ's disciples, it will plainly follow, that its observance on that day, continues to be obligatory in every succeeding age. If, on the other hand, the facts recorded in sacred history be found greatly at variance with the supposition that this transference took place: if it appear from indubitable evidence, that the seventh day sabbath continued to be observed throughout the whole of the apostolic age, not only by the unconverted Jews, but also by all the Jewish believers of the gospel; and if there exists no evidence of any new sabbath having been substituted in the room of

the Judaical one, it will seem natural to draw the inference, that the institution was viewed by the apostles as an integral part of the Mosaic economy—that handwriting of ordinances which was blotted out by Christ, and as destined to terminate at the political dissolution of the Hebrew commonwealth.

It is certain that the New Testament contains no record of the appointment of any new sabbath in the room of the institution previously observed by the Jewish nation. We search in vain the history of the apostolic age, for any indication of such an observance; there is nothing whatever mentioned from which it can be inferred that the early christians had been instructed to observe the first day of the week or any other day as more holy than another. The expressions "the sabbath," and "the sabbath day," are indeed of frequent occurrence, both in the histories of Christ's life and ministry, as well as in that of the propagation of the gospel, and the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, subsequent to his resurrection. It is obvious, that as respects the institutions of Christ's kingdom, there is little or no importance to be attached to these expressions of themselves; for in every instance in which they occur, it is evident that they relate to the seventh day sabbath; the observance of which was prescribed to the Jewish nation in the fourth commandment. As furnishing however, an indirect, but very unequivocal testimony to the sentiments which were current at the period, when the

New Testament books were written, the circumstance, that *at that time*, these expressions were uniformly used and understood to denote Saturday, seems to be deserving of very particular notice. From the frequent occurrence of these expressions, both in the gospels and in the book of Acts, it is natural to infer that the modern notion of the substitution, at the resurrection of Christ, of the first for seventh day of the week, as the appointed weekly sabbath was at that time little known, if indeed it was known at all.

In reading the Gospels, and the Acts of the apostles, we are very apt, through the influence of an early association of ideas, to connect the date of the publication of these books, with that of the leading events they record; and in this way are led practically to forget that a period of about thirty years elapsed between the first preaching of the gospel by the apostles and the circulation of the New Testament writings. It is to be borne in mind, that a considerable number of the early christians, for whose use and benefit the New Testament was primarily composed, were, at the date of the publication of its different books, professors of the christian name of comparatively old standing: and at that period, consequently, must have been quite familiar with all the positive duties of Christ's kingdom. It seems natural to think therefore, that if the first christians had been accustomed for thirty years to observe the first day of the week

as a holy sabbath, and to consider that day as the appointed substitute for the Jewish sabbath, that the inspired writers, when referring to this latter superseded ordinance, would have considered it necessary to distinguish it, in some way, from the new one.

The sacred historians however, it is to be observed, invariably make use of the expression "the sabbath day," to denote the seventh day of the week, without any explanation, or any apparent apprehension whatever of being misunderstood. At the present time, when persons speak of any event as having occurred on the sabbath day, their meaning is always understood to be, that it took place on a Sunday: and it is natural to think, that if the doctrine which is current at present, had been taught by the apostles, that the prevalence of this doctrine would have led the inspired writers, in narrating events which had occurred *on a Saturday*, to make use of *this* or some other distinguishing designation; or if they called it the sabbath, to explain that they meant the seventh day sabbath, and not the sabbath at that time universally observed by the followers of Christ.

As respects the Gentile converts especially, the circumstance referred to seems particularly difficult to reconcile with the supposition on which the modern doctrine is founded. If the christian sabbath, as it is now called, had, at that period, been universally observed by this class of converts, the first day

of the week must have been *the only day* familiarly known among them by the appellation of *sabbath:* for *they* had never been in the practice of observing any other. This new sabbath, however, is never, as has already been remarked, once referred to, and the inspired writers uniformly speak of Saturday, as the only sabbath day at that time known.

It is deserving of notice, moreover, that in the Acts of the apostles, a book which is supposed to have been published in the sixty fifth year of the christian era, this use of the term, occurs in a narrative which relates solely to the disciples of Christ. "And *on the sabbath* we (christians) went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made."[i]

It is also related of Paul, "that as his manner was, he went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures."[j] We read also, that at Corinth "he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."[k] It is to be kept in mind, that at Philippi, at Thessalonica, and at Corinth, the places referred to, there was no sabbath day publicly kept as in Judea: the observance of the seventh day sabbath was confined to the few Jews that were resident there. If, however, the christian converts living in these cities, had been in the practice of keeping Sunday as a holy sabbath, it is natural to think that *among them*

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[i] Acts xvi. 13. [j] Acts xvii. 2. [k] Acts xviii. 3.

the use of the term *sabbath*, to denote any particular day of the week, would have been understood as signifying Sunday, and not Saturday, the day which the new sabbath had supplanted.

It is deserving of notice also, that in the gospels, the expressions "the sabbath" and "the sabbath day," not only occur in narratives of events that took place during the life of Jesus, but also in predictions of events that were not to occur until forty years subsequent to the setting up of Christ's kingdom: and this, without the slightest allusion to the supposed substitution of the Christian for the Jewish sabbath, which change, if it had been designed to take place must doubtless, at that advanced period, have been completely established. Christ, in foretelling the coming destruction of Jerusalem, gave this injunction to his disciples, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day."[1] The sabbath day here referred to, must unquestionably have been the seventh day one; for the persons to whom Christ gave this warning, could not, without some intimation of the change, have well understood his meaning if he had intended any other. It is not a little remarkable, however, that the celebrated president Edwards has adduced this passage as furnishing an "argument" that the sabbatical law was designed to be of perpetual obligation. This argument he states as follows:—

[1] Matthew xxiv. 20.

"A further argument for the perpetuity of the "sabbath we have in Matthew xxiv. 20. 'Pray ye "that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the "sabbath day.' Christ is here speaking of the flight "of the apostles and other christians out of Jerusa- "lem and Judea, just before their final destruction, as "is manifest by the whole context, and especially by "the 16th verse—'Then let them which be in Judea "flee into the mountains.' But this final destruc- "tion of Jerusalem, was after the dissolution of the "Jewish constitution, and after the christian dispen- "sation was fully set up. Yet it is plainly implied "in these words of our Lord, that even then, christians "were bound to a strict observance of the sabbath."[m]

This writer appears confidently to have believed, that previous to the final destruction of Jerusalem, the christian sabbath was generally observed throughout Judea in the place of the Jewish ordinance, for on no other supposition is it conceivable, that the words of Christ can be construed as furnishing any evidence in support of the doctrine he was advocating. Now it is obvious, that this notion is at variance not only with the natural, unstrained meaning of Christ's injunction, but with the whole history of that eventful period. That the seventh day sabbath continued, after the introduction of the gospel, to be strictly observed throughout Judea, by the Jewish nation as

[m] Sermons on the Perpetuity of the Sabbath.—Works.—Vol. vii. 509.

usual, is a fact attested by all history sacred and prophane. It is certainly not a little difficult to conceive, in what manner *this* circumstance can be understood as implying any proof of the transference of the sabbatical law to the christian dispensation: for it seems very unequivocally to point at an opposite conclusion, namely, that the observance prescribed in the fourth commandment was interwoven with the Mosaic economy, and was not designed to terminate until the ultimate dissolution of the Jewish polity. That Jesus spoke of this national sabbath seems so obviously plain, as to admit neither of doubt nor dispute.

The supposition that his words imply that christians would, at that time, be bound to keep the christian sabbath, is founded on an entire misconception of the events which then took place. That all the disciples of Christ, of Jewish extraction, resident in Judea, were under a civil obligation to comply with the prescriptions of the fourth commandment, and with all the other laws of Moses, until the dissolution of the Jewish government, is a fact attested by the most incontrővertible historical evidence. It seems to be clear beyond all reasonable doubt, therefore, that in warning his disciples of the impending fate of the holy city, Christ spoke of this national sabbath; and his words, it is obvious, imply nothing more than what is in entire accordance with the ascertained facts of Jewish history; namely, that

the strict observance of the weekly sabbath continued to be enforced as the national law of Judea, on both Jews and Christians, until the final overthrow of the government in the seventieth year of the christian era.

The view taken of this very plain passage, by this celebrated writer, furnishes a striking illustration of the strong and injurious influence which preconceived notions sometimes exert over the most powerful minds, in the interpretation of scriptural evidence. In New England, it is well known, the doctrine of a christian sabbath was, in president Edwards' time, universally recognized, and its observance zealously and strictly enjoined, according to the threats and promises contained in the Old Testament. From being habituated to witness a general recognition of this sabbatical obligation, he seems hastily, and probably without much consideration, to have assumed, that the same obligation must have been recognized and acted on by the early christians during the time of the apostles, and that the observance of the new sabbath accordingly, must have been completely established long previous to the final destruction of Jerusalem.

The habit of viewing the apostolic age of christianity entirely through the medium of the religious regulations and appearances which now exist, and with which our minds have become familiar, is a common and natural source of innumerable errors

and misconceptions. Closely connected with this mistake, there is another, which, though less palpable, is probably, among a certain class of men, not less prevalent, and which certainly is not less deceptive in its influence: we refer to the common practice of teaching people christianity through the medium of human systems of divinity, and to the common result, of their being led by this means, to interpret every part of the sacred writings in accordance with a preconceived theory. When men's minds are preoccupied with the outlines of systems of this kind, they are very apt to overlook or practically to forget the gradual development of divine truth, the almost imperceptible beginning of the kingdom of Christ, and the very slow progress which it actually made in the world. By being accustomed too to view every period of sacred history through the medium of the compact systems of scholastic theologians, and the religious observances that are now established in the world, they are naturally led to suppose, that christianity presented in the apostolic age, an appearance very similar to that which it assumes at the present time. After, indeed, the influence of all these, and other natural causes of scriptural misconception, are taken into account, it must be allowed to be a very singular circumstance, that an acute writer like president Edwards, should have fallen into the palpable error of maintaining "that the dissolution of the Jewish constitution was

previous to the final destruction of Jerusalem:" or should ever have imagined, that anterior to that event, "the christian dispensation was fully set up;" so as to warrant the conclusion, that the christian sabbath had, at that time, assumed the place of the Jewish ordinance.

It is obvious that any small degree of plausibility which this argument possesses, is derived wholly from the fallacy of confounding the scriptural doctrine of the abrogation of the Mosaic law by the death of Christ, with the subsequent actual dissolution of the Jewish polity. It is very true, that the Mosaic economy received its accomplishment in the advent and work of the Messiah, and that "the christian dispensation was fully set up" previous to the final destruction of Jerusalem. That Christ fulfilled the law, and became the end of it for justification to every one who believed on him, is a leading truth inculcated in every part of the apostolic writings. It is not to be forgotten, however, that though those Jews who believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah, were as the subjects of "the new covenant," no longer "under the law but under grace;" as members of the Jewish commonwealth, they continued until its dissolution, under a civil obligation to comply with all the municipal laws and religious observances which the law of Moses prescribed. It is matter of history indeed, that the public religion established in Judea, was, in outward appearance, almost wholly unaffected

by the introduction of the gospel: the observance of the sabbath in obedience to the fourth commandment, and the observance of all the various rites and ceremonies prescribed in the law, continued to be enforced on the whole population, by the same severe penalties with which that religious economy had, in every period of its former existence, been sanctioned. Though it is quite true therefore, that the christian dispensation was fully set up previous to the final destruction of Jerusalem, it is a great mistake to suppose that this spiritual establishment of christianity in the world, was synchronous with the political dissolution of the Mosaic law. The kingdom of heaven was set up by the apostles immediately on receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit: and it came upon men without observation; for its doctrines and institutions interfered in no degree with the public religion established in Judea, or with any of the political or social institutions of the kingdoms of this world. The law of the sabbath, as well as the other national laws and religious rites of the Jewish government, continued in full force until the final destruction of the holy city by the Roman army.

When the history of the apostolic age of christianity is examined with any moderate degree of attention, it must appear very unaccountable, that the mistake of supposing "that the Jewish constitution was dissolved at the death of Christ, and that the christian dispensation was immediately substituted in

its place," should ever have obtained any prevalence in the world. There is reason to believe, however, that though little suspected, there have been few mistakes more current, or more fertile in the production of scriptural misconception and error. Accustomed indeed, as we are, to look upon the christian dispensation, as the divinely appointed successor of the Mosaic economy, it requires a considerable effort of the imagination to cast off the influence of this and other similar popular errors, and to conceive accurately of the actual state of public religion in Judea at the period of the first introduction of the gospel. Through being habituated to view the history of that period in constant connexion with the knowledge we now possess, of the immense consequences that hung upon the events which then took place, we are liable greatly to misapprehend the light in which these events were actually regarded by those who witnessed them. The occurrences which at that time really attracted the greatest share of public attention, have now probably passed into oblivion, or at least are, in a great measure, lost sight of and forgotten; while the few unobtrusive facts recorded in sacred history, appear, in our view, so important in themselves, as well as in their consequences to posterity, that it is naturally supposed they must have agitated the whole framework of society, and produced, almost instantaneously, a revolution in the

state of public opinion, as well as an entire change in the religious institutions of the country.

It is to be remembered, that during the few years of Christ's public ministry, his claims to the Messiahship, though attested by the most incontrovertible divine evidence, were either secretly contemned or openly opposed by all the leading public men of the time: and there is reason to believe, that in the general estimation of the Jewish public, the ignominious termination of his life was held to be a merited retribution for the capital crime with which he stood chargeable before the judicial tribunals of his country. There can be little doubt, indeed, that the religious pretensions of Jesus, must, in the judgment of all superficial onlookers, have appeared to be entirely confuted and overthrown by his ultimate arrest and public execution; and though *we now know* that God decided the controversy that had long been carried on between Him and his enemies the Jewish rulers, by raising him from the dead, thus reversing the sentence passed upon him, and attesting the validity of his claim to the Messiahship, we are not to suppose that this interpretation of these events was at that time generally recognized, or, indeed, that it was by any one clearly understood. We know that his own disciples forsook him at the mournful hour of exposure to public ignominy, and instead of rejoicing that the work of redemption was about to be completed, gave utterance to their disappointed

expectations, and desponding thoughts, in expressions like the following:—"We trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel"[n]—language plainly indicative of their entire ignorance of the leading design of Christ's advent, as also of the nature of that kingdom which he was about to establish in the world. The great facts of the gospel, indeed, the death and resurrection of Christ, important though they now appear to us, who have been taught by the apostles to apprehend their true meaning, attracted at that time, it is probable, a comparatively small degree of the public notice: and even after these facts had been proclaimed and testified by the apostles, and after the kingdom of Christ had been fully set up in the world, it is probable, that to a considerable portion of the inhabitants of Judea, the very existence of this kingdom was not known; at all events, it is certain that it was only by a mere fraction of the population,[o] that it was actually recog-

[n] Luke xxiv. 21.

[o] There were, no doubt a great many thousands of the Jewish people converted to Christ in the days of the apostles; but there are good grounds for believing that what is stated above, is materially correct. The population of Judea at Christ's Advent, appears, by all accounts, to have been very considerable. In the last Jewish war, and in the subsequent rebellions, millions were slain, and thousands fell by the hands of the executioner. Even after all this depopulation had taken place, the number of the Jewish people subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem, has by some writers been computed as amounting to "sixty six millions, two hundred and forty thousand." This estimate is surely greatly too high: it cannot be doubted however, that Judea contained at that period, a population of a great many millions.

See JAHN'S HEBREW COMMONWEALTH, Vol. II. p. 211.

nized as the promised kingdom of God. Even those who did recognize this kingdom, namely, the apostles and Jewish converts, continued to frequent the temple, and to conform to all the ceremonials of the Mosaic law as usual. This they did, not as christians, but as Jewish citizens, who were under a civil obligation to comply with all the civil and religious laws established in the country. In this way it is evident the kingdom of heaven would literally come upon men without observation. As christians the Jewish converts assembled for religious purposes daily, in each other's private houses, *(kat oikon*[p]*)* without exciting probably any particular notice. In public profession, in fact, these individuals continued to be Jews, even after their conversion to the faith of the gospel: that is, they continued to conform to all the religious rites and ceremonies prescribed in the law of Moses.

Thus, as regarded outward appearances, the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world without exciting much general observation, and without interfering in any degree with the political institutions of the kingdoms of this world. The affairs of the Jewish nation continued after its establishment to be carried on with the same order and regularity with which they had been conducted previous to its introduction: there was no change of dynasty,[q] or political

[p] Acts ii. 46.——evidently opposed to *en to iero.*

[q] Judea, it is well known, was at this time tributary to the Romans, and had been so ever since its conquest by Pompey. Pontius Pilate was procurator from A. D. 26 to 38.

movement of any kind calculated to agitate the public mind: the law of Moses continued to be recognized as the sole rule of public religious worship and civil government: the daily sacrifices, and all the various services of the Temple, continued to be celebrated with the wonted scrupulous care and solemnity; and the observance of the seventh day as a holy sabbath, continued to be enforced on the whole population of Judea, by the same solemn sanctions which had been annexed to the violation of the prescriptions of the law, at its original promulgation.

It has apparently been in the entire forgetfulness of these obvious facts, that the notion has been adopted, that at the introduction of christianity, the christian sabbath and sacraments, (as they are called) were substituted for certain ordinances, supposed to have been synonymous with them in use and signification, under the former dispensation. Opposed as this opinion is to the whole tenor of sacred history, it has, in various quarters, been entertained with an undoubting confidence, as if it were a first principle which admitted of no dispute. It has been supposed that the ordinance of the Lord's supper was appointed in the room of the Jewish Passover, and the ordinance of christian baptism in that of the rite of circumcision. Upon the same grounds it has been assumed, that the duties of the fourth commandment were transferred from Jews to Christians, and from the seventh day of the week to the first, and with this

alteration were, immediately after the resurrection of Christ, observed by Christians, much in the same way as the precept had previously been kept by the Jewish nation.

On this vague notion of a substitution of certain new religious ordinances at the introduction of the gospel, for rites of supposed correspondent signification under the Jewish economy, a considerable number of the unscriptural observances that have been appended to christianity since the time of the apostles, appear at present to have their main support. It requires, however, little more than a slight consideration of the history of that period, and especially of the then existing state of public religion in Judea, to detect the fallacy on which this whole theory of "substitution" has its foundation.

The opinion, for instance, that the ordinance of baptism was appointed at the beginning of the gospel, to occupy the room of the Jewish rite of circumcision, must be regarded as nothing more than a modern conjecture, which admits of no scriptural proof; for no instituted connexion between these two ordinances, is ever mentioned either in the Old Testament or the New. It seems very unlikely that this notion of the one rite having assumed the place of the other, should have prevailed among the early christians; for it is certain that all the Jewish believers continued to circumcise their male children, when eight days old, for forty years subsequent to the establishment

of the kingdom of Christ, precisely in the same manner as they had formerly done, prior to their being themselves baptized into the faith of the gospel. It is difficult to perceive in what points these two ordinances are at all analagous;[r] at all events, it seems very clear, that while these first christians were observing both rites at the same time, they at least could not well have entertained the notion that the one had been substituted for the other.

The doctrine of the Westminster Assembly, that "ever since the resurrection of Christ, God has appointed the first day of the week to be the christian sabbath," appears to have its foundation on a similar fallacious assumption. That at the resurrection of Christ, there was any alteration made in the pre-

[r] The various ordinances of the Mosaic economy had all, no doubt, a peculiar spiritual signification, as well as the few and simple ordinances of Christianity; and in this respect, there certainly exists between them some degree of resemblance. Having all, however, accomplished the end for which they were appointed, they are now abolished; and the emblematical meaning they possessed has been fulfilled, not by their being converted into ordinances of correspondent use and signification, but by a natural termination in the spiritual realities of the gospel. The Messiah, himself, came in the room of the Passover: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," That change of heart which all true believers experience, has come in the place of circumcision: for christians are now "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands;" the Jewish circumcision, which was *a figure* of the moral renovation produced by the belief of the gospel, was external, and cut off a part of the flesh: the christian circumcision, namely, "the putting off the fleshly body of sin," is internal, and takes place without any manual operation. Thus, the passover and circumcision, as well as the various Jewish "meats and drinks, their holidays, their new moons, and sabbaths were all a shadow of good things to come; but the body is of Christ," See Col. 2, *passim*.

scriptions of the fourth commandment, or that the converts to the gospel were taught to sanctify the first day of the week instead of the seventh, are suppositions destitute of all appearance of probability, and directly opposed to the whole current of sacred history. It is undeniable, that the seventh day sabbath continued, as has already been mentioned, to be observed by the Jewish nation, and by all the Jewish believers of the gospel subsequent to the resurrection of Christ, precisely in the same way as it had been observed previous to the Messiah's advent. Now, when it is kept in mind that Judaism continued for forty years after the setting up of Christ's kingdom to be the publicly professed religion throughout Judea, it must appear very improbable that any new sabbath should at that time have been viewed as the substitute of another, which *at that very time*, continued to be as universally and strictly observed as it had ever been at any former period. It is to be borne in mind also that there was no general expectation entertained at that time, of the impending fate of Jerusalem, of the catastrophe which shortly afterwards overturned the Jewish government. There is every reason to believe, indeed, that even among the christian converts, the opinion was very prevalent that the seventh day sabbath and several other ordinances of the Mosaic economy, were designed to retain their obligation under the new dispensation. It is well known that a considerable body of Jewish

believers continued to observe the Jewish ritual long after the destruction of Jerusalem: so tenacious, indeed, were a number of them, of the notion of the perpetuity of the sabbatical law in particular, that they continued for several centuries to adhere to the observance of the seventh day, and succeeded in various places in prevailing on the general body of believers, to join them in the same Judaizing practice.

On whatever other grounds then, the doctrine of a christian sabbath, as taught by the Westminster Assembly and others, can be maintained, it seems very clear, that the argument usually adduced in its support, from its being the supposed substitute of the weekly sabbath of the Jewish nation, is very unsound and fallacious. The only sabbath observed in obedience to the fourth commandment, during the time that the apostles were the authoritative directors of christian obedience, was *the seventh day* of the week. This day was observed by the apostles themselves, by the Jewish converts to the gospel, as also by the whole Jewish people. Than this sabbath, there is no evidence that the apostles and early christians ever observed any other: the conjecture that they did so, that for forty years they continued to observe two successive sabbath days weekly, in obedience to the same commandment, seems to be alike improbable and unfounded.

Having thus shortly considered the relation in which the Jewish believers of the gospel are recorded to have stood to the fourth commandment, during the apostolic age of christianity; proceed we now to inquire, whether there be any evidence of the sabbatical observance which this commandment prescribes, having been transferred to the Gentile converts. As our situation corresponds more nearly with the circumstances of this class of converts, than with those of the Jewish believers, the directions they received from the apostles, on this and on other questions of christian obligation, are deserving of especial consideration. It is, in fact, by placing ourselves in imagination, in the situation which they occupied; and in this way considering the authoritative instructions they received from Christ's apostles, that we can most satisfactorily ascertain the existing obligation of the law of the sabbath, or of any other of the laws of Moses, as well as the nature and extent of "those things which Christ commanded," which are now the sole rule and standard of christian obedience.

That the Jewish believers sanctified the seventh day of the week during the time of the apostles, in obedience to the fourth commandment, is matter of authentic history. The point we have to ascertain then, is simply this—Was the observance which this commandment prescribes, made obligatory on those christian converts who had never been the

subjects of the law of Moses? On this question the whole controversy regarding the perpetuity of the law of the sabbath under the christian dispensation, seems in a great measure to hinge.

Of these Gentile converts, there were two descriptions: the first, those who by the Jews were termed proselytes of the Gate, and who, in the New Testament, are designated "devout men," "fearing God." They were persons apparently, who, benefiting by the knowledge diffused by those Jews that had settled in the various cities of the world, had renounced idolatry, and become worshippers of the true God. Of such was Cornelius, of whom, though a Gentile, it is recorded, that "he feared God, and all his house." Though these devout Gentiles are supposed to have conformed to several of the observances of the Mosaic law, they did not wholly become proselytes to the Jewish religion. They abstained, however, from things offered unto idols, and never used blood in food, or the flesh of any animal strangled, as retaining the blood. The other description of converts were Gentile idolaters, who had been sunk in the gross darkness and debasing practices of pagan worship. To them, the mission of the apostle Paul seems specially to have been directed: "he was sent to them to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It is very necessary to bear in mind, the difference which at that period actually existed between these

two kinds of Gentile converts; for unless this distinction be attended to, we must ever fail to apprehend, with accuracy, the design of the apostles, in several of the directions they gave respecting the rule of christian duty.

It is easy to trace three distinct periods in the apostolic history, in the first of which, the church was kept in ignorance of the second, and had advanced far upon the second before the third was declared to them, and each by a special revelation. Their ministry commenced with the Jews alone. It appears certain, that the apostles themselves did not then understand that it was ever to be extended beyond their countrymen. Their ancient national error was not yet removed, that through Judaism the world must be admitted to the benefits of the Messiah's advent, must be saved, not as the sons of fallen Adam, but as the children of righteous Abraham. Under this impression, they taught through Judea, Samaria, and at last at Antioch.

Then it was, that by a special vision sent to Peter, his scruples were first removed, and he was made to understand by the conversion of Cornelius and his household, that a door was opened to the Gentiles. But to what Gentiles? Not to all indiscriminately, but to such, as like Cornelius, were "devout Gentiles," "fearing God;" otherwise known as proselytes of the gate, Gentiles, who, without becoming altogether Jews, had adopted their belief in the

one true God, and sought acceptance with him by fasting and by prayer. Yet of the baptism even of these, St. Peter's report to the church of Jerusalem, is but an apology; "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?"[s]

Lastly, a further light broke forth on the church, when by another express revelation Paul and Barnabas were separated for the conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles.[t] Of all the wonderful counsel of the Lord, this was considered the most wonderful. This it is which is especially styled "the mystery of godliness," the revealing of which produced a sensation, both within and without the church, to which no one who would understand the writings and the history of the great apostle of the Gentiles, should be inattentive."[u]

The time which elapsed during the first of the three periods above referred to, is supposed to have been from A. D. 33 to A. D. 41: from this to the extension of the gospel to the devout Gentiles, forms another period from A. D. 41 to A. D. 45. The latter period comprehends a term of twenty-five years, extending from A. D. 45 to A. D. 70, when Jerusalem was taken, the Jewish polity dissolved, and the grounds on which these distinctions were founded, were for ever removed.

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[s] Acts xi. 17. [t] Acts xiii. 2.

[u] Hind's History of the Rise and Progress of Christianity, Vol I, 144.

It is to be borne in mind then, that though the great facts of the gospel were testified to all these converts alike: though all these different classes were alike instructed in the true meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the promised Messiah, "the son of the living God," there was a considerable difference in the directions they received as regarded their respective personal obligations. While all who had been called, being circumcised, were directed to continue "in circumcision;" those on the other hand, who had been called "in uncircumcision," were enjoined not to comply with any religious precept or custom, in obedience to the law. All conduct of this kind was strictly forbidden them, as being contrary to their allegiance to Christ their sole master, as well as inconsistent with the nature of that gospel liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free. This distinction in the respective obligations of the early believers, became a frequent source of misunderstanding and difference, in several of the churches. The Jewish believers, being "all zealous of the law," attempted to extend its obligation to their Gentile brethren, and some of them went so far as to maintain, that "except these persons were circumcised after the manner of Moses they could not be saved."[v] At Antioch, especially, this question was canvassed with great warmth and contention;

[v] Acts xv. 1.

so much so, as to render it necessary that the matter should be referred to the apostles and others resident in Jerusalem.

Whether the decree that was issued on this occasion, related to all the Gentile converts, or merely to that portion of them who, previous to their conversion, had been proselytes of the gate, though a question of considerable interest and importance in other respects, is immaterial to the point at present under consideration, namely, the relation in which christians now stand to the law of Moses. As there were no converted idolaters in the church of Antioch at that time, it is more than probable, that the decree had a peculiar reference to the "devout Gentiles" there and elsewhere, who had embraced the gospel, and was designed for their government exclusively: but whether or not this were the case, it is certain that its contents determine beyond all controversy, the entire repeal of every Mosaic precept, *as such*, under the christian dispensation.

In answer to the Judaizing teachers, who clamorously contended, "That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentile converts] and to command them to keep the law of Moses,"[w] it was authoritatively decided by the apostles, "We have concluded that they keep no such thing."[x]

The things excepted in the apostolic decree, "meats offered to idols, fornication, things strangled,

[w] Acts xv, 5. [x] Acts xxi, 25.

and blood," from all of which these converts were enjoined to abstain, were probably that part of the Jewish ceremonial, which these "devout Gentile" converts had been accustomed to observe prior to their embracing the gospel. This supposition seems to be countenanced by the speech of the apostle James, who, in delivering his opinion, speaks as if he thought, that in enjoining a compliance with these customs, he "was not troubling them, who, from among the Gentiles had turned to God," or placing any yoke on their necks, which they had not borne previous to their conversion. It seems, in fact, to have been the prevailing opinion of all the leading men of the council, that it was not desirable to impose any restraint upon the new converts, which existing circumstances did not call for; and the reason that appears to have weighed with them, to enjoin the keeping up of the few religious customs which the Gentile proselytes had observed prior to the introduction of the gospel, was, that the shock might, by the retention of these forms, be obviated, which naturally would have been given to Jewish prejudices by their neglect, and especially by the disregard of the ancient and scrupulously observed precept regarding abstinence from blood. That this was their reason for specifying these practices, seems to be implied in the apostle's concluding words: "For Moses of old time hath, in every city, them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every sabbath day.[y]

[y] Acts xv, 21.

With the exception of these few customs,[a] the observance of which, it is evident, was enjoined on the grounds of existing expediency, it was decided by the apostles, that from "the law of Moses," the Gentile converts should be wholly exempted. Among the things excepted, it is to be observed, neither the observance of the sabbath, nor the decalogue itself, is included: it seems natural, therefore, to infer, that this code of national law, and the sabbatical institution comprised in it, were not considered by the apostles of Christ, as connected with the kingdom of heaven, or as retaining any obligation on Christ's disciples.

This conclusion seems so obviously to follow, from the authoritative decision of the apostles, and is also so accordant with the evident scope of numerous passages in the apostolic epistles, that it appears to be impossible, without a constant straining of some of the plainest and most explicit statements contained in the sacred volume, to avoid arriving at it. Owing however, to indistinct views having been entertained of the grounds of moral obligation, and, to the adop-

[a] That an abstinence from fornication, which certainly it is not usual now to call a religious custom, should have been coupled with the ceremonial practices specified in the decree, will not appear strange to any one who bears in mind how greatly the moral sense, in respect to this vice, was injured by the opinions and practices that, at that time, prevailed in the Gentile world. The practice was not regarded as a sin; its excess only, was held to be blameworthy. It formed indeed a part of the Pagan worship, and among the Hindoos and others is actually a religious custom at the present time.

See on this subject, Hind's History.

tion by a certain school of theologians, of the Judaical decalogue as the foundation and rule of christian obedience, the inference, that the Gentile converts were exempted from the law as a whole, natural and obvious as it is, has, in various quarters, been studiously evaded. That this conclusion, though entirely accordant with the whole tenor of the New Testament, greatly interferes with the long established arrangements of the popular systems of divinity to which we refer, is sufficiently obvious. It has been assumed, "that the moral law is comprehended in the ten commandments;" and from this assumption, it has hastily been inferred, that, as every moral precept is of perpetual and indispensable obligation, no portion of this code of laws can possibly have been included in the things from which the Gentile converts were exempted. By identifying in this manner, the Judaical code of national law, with the eternal and universal rule of moral obligation, the apostolic doctrine *of the entire abrogation of the Mosaic law,* has been strenuously opposed, as undermining the whole foundation of christian morality.

We readily admit, that were it correct that the moral law is comprehended in the ten commandments, and that this code of national law is the foundation of moral obligation, the refusal to recognize the inference which naturally follows from the apostolic decision, would, however difficult to reconcile with some of the most explicit declarations of

scripture, be supported by reasons of no ordinary weight and importance. It is an unquestionable truth, that every precept of a moral nature, is of perpetual and indispensable obligation: neither can we conceive it possible that any law of this kind can be abrogated so long as a relation between man as a rational and accountable being, and God, as his Creator and judge, continues to exist.

The question, it is obvious, is not at all whether the Gentile converts were exempted by the apostolic decree, from any moral precept: that they were not, is on all hands admitted. But though this is quite true, we conceive it is not correct to affirm, that precepts of this kind retained their obligation on account of their being specified by Moses. That there were numerous moral precepts sanctioned by temporal rewards and punishments, incorporated with the Mosaic economy, is clear beyond all dispute; it would indeed, have been very remarkable, if a system of civil and religious polity of divine origin and construction, like that erected among the Jewish nation, had not comprised numerous precepts of immutable obligation; for even governments purely political, that are founded on considerations of expediency, find it necessary to adopt various laws which have a foundation in the principles of moral rectitude. There is no evidence, however, that the apostles considered it necessary to separate the moral portion of the national law of Judea, from that part which was

ceremonial in order to secure the interests of christian morality.

The decalogue was, at that time, it is to be borne in mind, the established law of the Hebrew commonwealth, and was enforced, by temporal penalties, on every member of the community. The apostles accordingly, uniformly speak of the law as a whole, without making any distinction between its duties; and declare concerning it, that the Gentile converts were exempted from its obligation: every duty of a moral nature remained, of course, in force; but every precept which it specified, whether moral or ceremonial, was disannulled in as far as the authority of Moses was concerned.

It is to be remembered also, that though these converts were thus declared to be free from this code of national law as such, as well as from all the other commandments of Moses, they were taught to recognize the natural law of conscience, which "had been written in their hearts"[a] before the gospel had been made known to them. This law of conscience embraced every moral duty which the decalogue specified, as well as every other precept included in the principles of the love of God and our neighbour.

It is obvious indeed, that the grounds of moral obligation, were then, and at every former period, wholly independent of the Judaical decalogue; for every moral duty must have been binding long prior

[a] Romans ii, 15.

to the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai. If it had been otherwise—if the sinfulness of murder, for instance, had depended on its being a violation of the sixth commandment, those who lived previous to the time of Moses would have been innocent of that crime, though chargeable with imbruing their hands in the blood of their fellow men. It is manifest that, as every moral precept must have been in force previous to the giving of the Mosaic law, it naturally continued to be binding on all men, not only during the existence of that law, but subsequent to its abrogation. As all duties of this kind, therefore, were supposed to be obligatory on the Gentile converts as human beings, prior to their conversion, they were supposed to be binding on them afterwards; not indeed, because they were specified in the decalogue, but because, from their own nature, they were considered to be obligatory, independent of every written code of laws whatever.

The question then, we repeat, is not whether the Gentile converts were exempted from any moral precept, but whether the decalogue and the sabbatical observance it prescribes were not considered, in the apostolic age, to be an integral part of the Mosaic institution. That they were viewed in this light at that time, seems to be indubitable: for *at that very time,* this code of laws continued to constitute an essential part of the Jewish civil and religious government, and was enforced, not only on the unconverted

Jews, but on the apostles themselves, and on all the Jewish believers of the gospel. The point, in fact, actually debated at the council of Jerusalem, was, "whether it was needful to command the Gentile converts to keep the law of Moses;" words which plainly import that the question under consideration was, whether the law, viewing it as a whole religious dispensation, should be imposed on them. It was accordingly the express object of the decree issued by the apostles, conclusively to settle this question, by authoritatively exempting these converts from every prescription of the law of Moses as such, enjoining upon them at the same time, the observance of the few religious practices the decree specified. "They were delivered from the law, that being dead" under which the Jewish people were held, and were "married to another even to Him who is raised from the dead."[b]

It has already been suggested that the question of the existing obligation of the law of the sabbath, resolves itself into a simple question of fact, which, like all other matters of fact, can be determined solely by proper evidence. This evidence lies within a very narrow compass, and seems to be both clear and decisive in determining the points with which we are concerned.

Of any other sabbath than the Mosaic one, which continued to be observed even by the Jewish believers

[b] Romans vii, 4-6.

of the gospel, for forty years subsequent to the death of Christ, there is no mention made in the New Testament writings. That *the seventh day* of the week continued to be kept as a holy sabbath during the whole of the apostolic age of christianity, is matter of unquestionable history. Now, whether we consider the recorded practice of the Jewish believers, in reference to this sabbatical institution, or that of the Gentile converts, the conclusion seems to be, on all sides, corroborated and confirmed, that the observance was, at that period, viewed as being entirely a prescription of the law of Moses, and as having no connexion with the institutions of "the kingdom of heaven." The fact of the seventh day of the week continuing for forty years, subsequent to the first setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to be sanctified in obedience to the fourth commandment by all the Jewish believers of the gospel, is surely very irreconcilable with the assumption, "that the duties of the fourth commandment were transferred at the resurrection of Christ to the first day of the week, and with this alteration, retained their obligation on Christ's disciples."

The question however, which it is of greatest importance to ascertain, as bearing most decisively upon the point at issue, is, whether the observance of the fourth commandment was enjoined on those converts, who had not previously been subjects of the law of Moses? On this point, the testimony of

the New Testament is alike explicit and conclusive. When the question was agitated and formally discussed, whether "it was needful to command the Gentile converts to keep the law of Moses," the matter was set at rest by the authoritative judgment of the apostles: "We have concluded that they observe no such thing." As these converts were thus expressly exempted from the law as a whole, they must have been exempted from the observance of the sabbath as entirely, as from any of its prescriptions. As there is no other sabbatical ordinance ever mentioned in the New Testament, save that prescribed in the Judaical decalogue, it seems naturally to follow, that the law of the sabbath, was viewed by the apostles of Christ, as an integral part of the Mosaic dispensation, and as destined to terminate with that system of civil and religious polity, with which it had, in divine wisdom, been originally incorporated. We conceive then, that by these and other unquestionable facts, all unequivocally expressive of the mind and will of God upon the matter, the entire abrogation of the law of the sabbath under the christian dispensation, is beyond all reasonable doubt determined.

SECTION III.

THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE RELATIVE TO THE EXISTING OBLIGATION OF THE LAW OF THE SABBATH FURTHER CONSIDERED.

THE conclusions at which we have arrived, namely, that the weekly sabbath was viewed by the apostles as an integral part of the Jewish economy, and that all the early christians, who, prior to their conversion, had not been subjects of the law of Moses, were exempted from its obligation, appear to receive considerable corroboration from various passages which occur in the apostolic epistles.

That no certain portion of time has been appointed under the gospel, to be observed as more holy than another, seems clearly to be implied in the following words of the apostle Paul:—"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike [holy.] Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."[c]

Among "the saints in Rome," to whom this epistle

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[c] Rom. xiv. 5.

is addressed, we learn from its contents there were both Jewish and Gentile believers: though Paul was not personally acquainted at this time with the christians resident in that city, he seems to have been quite aware, that there existed among them a considerable diversity of opinion regarding their respective obligations as to the observance of certain meats and days: for the amicable arrangements of these differences, and with a view, apparently, to allay the heats of "the doubtful disputations" that were likely to occur on various points of this nature, he recommended to all, the exercise of charity on the one hand, and a full persuasion of personal duty on the other. That they would all think and act alike upon these matters, he seems to have thought was not in the nature of things, to be looked for: every one, however, was bound to act on his personal convictions of duty; for whatever was the nature of the action itself, if performed with any doubt or scruple regarding its lawfulness, it necessarily became, to that person, a sinful one: "for whatever is not of faith, (that is, whatever is done without a conviction of it being lawful) is sin."

If the distinctions which existed between the various classes of converts, of which the christian church was then composed, be kept in recollection, this exhortation to exercise mutual forbearance, and to allow every one "to follow the full persuasion of his own mind," will appear very natural and

extremely judicious. After making due allowance, however, for the circumstance of these various classes recognizing in some particulars, different rules of religious obedience; if we adopt the modern supposition, that there was a christian law then in force, which required the sanctification of a weekly portion of time to God's exclusive service, the propriety of the apostle's counsel must necessarily appear very questionable. If the observance of the first, or any other day of the week, had at that time been enjoined as a christian duty, the law must have been regarded by all to be of indispensable obligation: were we to suppose therefore, that the observance of a weekly sabbath had actually been commanded, we should be greatly at a loss to conceive how Paul could, in that case, have been warranted in affirming, "that he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." It is utterly inconceivable that any christian, whether of Jewish or Gentile extraction, could possibly have manifested his allegiance to Christ, by not regarding the observance of any one day, and "esteeming every day alike holy," if the observance of a certain day as more holy than others, had formed a part of "the things which Christ had commanded."

Another passage corroborative of the same conclusion, occurs in the epistle to the Colossians:— "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or

of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."[d]

"From this text," says Bishop Horsley, "no less a man than the venerable Calvin drew the conclusion, that the sanctification of the seventh day is no indispensable duty in the christian church—that it is one of those carnal ordinances of the Jewish religion which our Lord hath blotted out." "Mr. Baxter observes, with his usual spirit," says the candid Doddridge, "that we may well wonder at those good men that can find the prohibition of a form of prayer, or a written sermon in the second commandment, and yet cannot find the abrogation of the Jewish law relating to the sabbath, in these plain words of the apostle. For it is certainly most arbitrary to pretend that these words do not include *a weekly sabbath*, when there was no other solemnity so *generally* signified by that name."[e]

It is Paul's design in the paragraph of which these verses form a part, to exhort the Colossian believers to adhere in their religious obedience, closely and stedfastly to the authority of Christ, "as the supreme head of all government and power." He acquaints them that their fulness was in Him, who had blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that stood against them, having nailed it to his cross: and that having been buried with Christ in baptism, they were also raised to life with him, by the procurement

[d] Col. ii. 16, 17. [e] Dodd. Expos. in loco.

of an entire confidence in God, who raised Christ from the dead. He farther instructs them, that, having thus died with Christ, and become wholly dead to the law by a gracious pardon of all their transgressions, they were made complete in the knowledge of their duty by the revealed will of Christ, and ought not to suffer any one to rule them in meats or in drinks, or in respect of an holy day, or the new moon, or sabbath days. The scope of his exhortation seems to be this :—" Let no man be allowed to call you to account for the exercise of that liberty to which you have been called : these carnal ordinances of the Jews, their meats, and drinks, and sabbaths, and other holy seasons, were merely a shadow of blessings to come ;—the substance of which is Christ's body, the church."

It ought to be borne in mind, that when Paul wrote this Epistle, the seventh day sabbath continued to be observed in obedience to the fourth commandment, by the Jewish nation, and all the Jewish believers of the Gospel throughout the world. The apostle did not find fault with this, for he himself continued to observe the sabbath : it seems very improbable however, that he would have used language like that in the passage before us, exhorting Christians to resist those who presumed to judge them for refusing to keep the sabbaths, and reprehending their observance of all days of this kind as imposing ordinances on themselves, according to the doctrines

and commandments of men, if he had held the modern doctrine, that the fourth commandment retained its obligation under the gospel, or if, indeed, he had thought there was any law at all then in force, requiring the observance of a weekly sabbath as an institution of "the kingdom of heaven."

Another passage to the same purpose, occurs in the epistle to the Galatians:—"How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."[f]

"By days, in this passage," says Macknight, "the Apostle means the Jewish weekly sabbaths, by seasons, the annual festivals, by years, the sabbatical years and Jubilees."[g] In the apostolic writings it is deserving of notice, the weekly sabbath is usually classed with the abrogated ordinances of the Mosaic law, and is familiarly spoken of, as if, at that time, it was universally understood to be an integral part of the Jewish economy. The general tenor of Paul's writings in particular, in reference to this ordinance, seems altogether irreconcilable with the supposition that he was in the practice of inculcating its observance on the subjects of the new covenant. This expostulation with the Christians in Galatia for instance, appears alike natural and forcible, if we

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[f] Gal. iv. 9-11.

[g] Macknight in loco.

keep in mind the facts of the case; that the Gentile converts, though exempted from this, as well as from the other prescriptions of the Mosaic law, had, by listening to the insidious doctrines of some Judaizing teachers, been reverting to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism, instead of standing fast in that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. The apostle uniformly taught, that Christ was the end of the law, for justification to every one, whether Jew or Gentile, who believed on him; and that the subjects of the new covenant were, as such, no longer under Moses: "they were become dead to that law," under which the subjects of the old covenant had been held.

As the Mosaic constitution remained undissolved until the destruction of Jerusalem, all the Jewish believers resident in Judea, continued, as has already been mentioned, under a civil obligation to conform to all the Mosaic precepts, whether moral, civil, or ceremonial; it appears that those of them who were domiciled in Greece and Italy, and who were in the practice of periodically revisiting Jerusalem at the different Jewish festivals, were also indulged in their natural attachment to the religious observances of their ancestors. There were several of the Hellenistic Jews, we learn, who, not content with this indulgence, attempted, in their ignorant zeal for the law, to prevail on the Gentile converts to join them in its observance. The obtrusion of these Judaical

notions, seems to have furnished a constant bone of contention to the churches, during the whole of the apostolic age: and, as several of the Gentile believers manifested a strong disposition to adopt the observance of the weekly sabbath, and some other Jewish observances, they incurred the warm rebuke and earnest expostulation of the apostle: "Why are ye turning back to these weak and beggarly elements, observing days, and months, and years? I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

On the supposition that Paul taught the doctrine of the entire abolition of the law, his language on this and other similar occasions, appears extremely natural, and his rebuke perfectly just: if we suppose, however, that he taught the doctrine of the perpetuity of the sabbath, his expostulation is divested of its principal force. For how could these Galatian christians have been so much to blame for reverting to the observance of a weekly sabbath, if they had been taught, that the fourth commandment retained its obligation under the christian dispensation? If we admit the natural and unstrained meaning of the numerous passages in the New Testament, which state, that the law, viewing it as a whole, has been done away with, Paul's reasoning, in this and in various others of his epistles, cannot fail to appear as being alike clear and conclusive: on any other interpretation of these passages, the apostle's mean-

ing must ever, we conceive, be very partially understood, if it be not indeed wholly misapprehended.

When it is remembered, that, notwithstanding the virtual abrogation of the law by the finished work of the Messiah, the Mosaic economy as a political institution, remained then, in appearance, wholly unaffected by the introduction of the gospel; the lucid and forcible terms in which the apostle taught the great truth of the abolition of the law, and the bold and uncompromising manner in which he practically maintained the doctrine of christian liberty,[h] must appear to furnish no unimportant evidence of that divine inspiration, which, as an apostle of Christ, he possessed. While outwardly he was complying with the Jewish observances, he inwardly had outgrown the law, and was rejoicing in Christ Jesus, having confidence in nothing else. To forward the progress of others in the knowledge of this liberty, and to encourage them to stand fast in it, were leading objects in all his epistles to the christian churches. To this circumstance, all who would now thoroughly understand the nature of that christian liberty for which Paul contended, and the general scope and true meaning of his writings, will do well to attend.

It is to be remembered, that an obligation to sanctify a determinate portion of time to God's worship and service, can arise solely from an express

[h] See Galatians ii.

revelation of the divine will, for without such a revelation, it is impossible in the nature of things, that men could discover any reason for considering one portion of time to be more holy than another. Apart from the knowledge derived from an express precept, there can be no intrinsic holiness, as far the human mind can discern, in the seventh day of the week, or in the first, more than in the third, or fourth, or fifth. If the observance of the first, or any other day of the week, as a holy sabbath, has been enjoined on the subjects of the new covenant, this duty must necessarily be of indispensable obligation: of any command of this kind however, the New Testament contains no record. In the absence, therefore, of all evidence of such a command, the inference seems to be inevitable, that christianity recognizes no distinction of days, and leaves its subjects at perfect liberty "to esteem every day alike holy."

There are some, however, who seem to think that the mention of the first day of the week, which it appears, occurs *three times* in the New Testament, ought to be regarded as a proof of the first christians having kept that day as a weekly sabbath. With how little reason this notion has been entertained, a very brief examination of all the cases in which the mention of this day occurs, will suffice to show.

It may be proper to premise, that the question is not at all concerning the lawfulness and propriety of the

practice, which at present prevails, of christians holding their stated convocations for worship on the first day of the week: the existing expediency of this established custom is by no one controverted. The point we have to determine, is not the expediency of the present practice, but the existence of a sabbatical law, and the consequent obligation resulting from this law on all Christ's disciples, to separate a determinate portion of time from a common to a sacred use. If such a law be now in force, the disciples of Christ are doubtless bound to obey it: if no such law exists, they ought to beware of imposing on themselves or others, the traditions and commandments of men.

The mention of the first day of the week occurs John xx. 19, Acts xx. 7, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. In each of these cases the expression is naturally interwoven with the context, in which, it is to be observed, there is not the slightest allusion to any sabbatical observance: in the absence of all evidence of the promulgation of a divine command, it seems very preposterous to suppose, that the apparently incidental mention of the first day of the week in a general narrative, was designed to be understood as implying that the observance of that day as a weekly sabbath, was to be a duty of indispensable obligation on Christ's followers until the end of time. To construe the casual mention of a particular day of the week in an artless narrative, into an authoritative prece-

dent for the observance of a holy sabbath, is surely to violate every correct rule of biblical interpretation, and to apply the sacred history to a purpose for which the sacred historian never designed it.

In the first of these passages it is recorded, "that the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, peace be unto you." This was the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; and it is probable the disciples had not previously met together since their dispersion at Christ's apprehension. Whatever may have been the object of their meeting on this occasion, the circumstance of it being mentioned that they were assembled with shut doors for fear of the Jews, when Christ first appeared to them, which was on the evening of the first day of the week, cannot, surely, be correctly interpreted as furnishing any evidence of their keeping Sunday at that time as a holy sabbath. It is certain that the meeting was not convened in obedience to Christ's authority, neither was it held for christian worship: for, at that time, the disciples had not all learned that Jesus had risen from the dead: and we are told that when he did first stand in the midst of them, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit."[1]

[1] Luke xxiv. 37.

The nature of this and of the other meetings between the risen Saviour and his disciples, during the time he remained on earth, is so far removed from the ordinary objects of christian intercourse, that it seems altogether improper to interpret any particular circumstance attending such interviews as designed to constitute an authoritative precedent for christians in future ages to follow. It is certain that he appeared on different other days of the week besides the first; See John xxi. 3, 4.[k] —it is expressly stated, indeed, "that he shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen of the disciples *forty days*, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."[l]

It seems then to be very arbitrary and unreasonable to attach any importance to the mention of any one day, seeing that he was seen of the disciples for forty days. Whether the expression John xx. 26, "after eight days," that is, eight days after the day of Christ's resurrection, refers to the following Sunday, or as the words seem more naturally to indicate, to the day after, is a question wholly immaterial to the point under consideration. The particular day of the week on which the incredulity of

[k] In this passage it is mentioned that on the next morning after *that day*, on which Peter and others went a-fishing, Jesus appeared to them standing on the shore. On whatever other day of the week this took place, it certainly could not have been on the first; for it was not lawful, at that time, to go a-fishing on Saturday, the sabbath day.

[l] Acts i. 3.

Thomas was removed is a matter of small moment compared with the removal itself—the leading subject evidently of the narrative. To infer the existence of a positive duty like that of a sabbatical observance, from the time being mentioned at which a supernatural meeting of this kind took place, seems to be alike preposterous and unwarrantable. A leading object of these extraordinary interviews was, doubtless, to communicate instruction to the disciples regarding the nature of that kingdom which they were to become instrumental in setting up in the world: and to qualify the apostles for the duties of that embassy on which they were shortly afterwards to be sent. It was not until the day of pentecost, when, by the descent of the holy spirit, they were endued with power from on high, that the christian dispensation, correctly speaking, commenced. Then it was that the kingdom of Christ was set up, and that the good news of a free and full forgiveness of sin through Jesus the true Messiah, and of a complete justification from all things from which men could not possibly have been justified by the law of Moses, were first openly proclaimed. It is not from the extraordinary events that occurred in the interval between Christ's resurrection and ascension, but from the inspired history of the rise and progress of Christ's kingdom in the world, and from the recorded practice of those disciples who acted in obedience to the apostles, that we can most satisfactorily ascertain

that will of Christ, which constitutes the sole rule of obedience under the gospel.

The second occurrence of the first day of the week, is in Acts xx. 7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." This appears to be the only case on record, in which it is certain that the disciples met for christian purposes on the first day of the week, during New Testament times. In this instance, as well as the others, their meeting on this day, is evidently not the leading subject of the narrative of which it forms a part: it serves simply as an introduction to the account that follows, of the accident that befel the young man named Eutychus, and of his miraculous cure by Paul. It is difficult to say whether this meeting was a stated or an occasional one; but however this may have been, it is plain, there is no part of the narrative that affords any support to the conjecture, that the christians at Troas observed the first day of the week as a holy sabbath; neither is it implied that they attached any importance to that day more than to any other. It is certain, that at other places, the disciples assembled for christian purposes on various other days of the week. At Jerusalem, they continued *daily* to break bread from house to house.[m] We read, that at

[m] Acts ii. 46.

Philippi, Paul and his companions met at a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, on the sabbath.[n] It seems to have been Paul's stated practice to preach the gospel on that day. See Acts xiii. 14-42;—xviii. 4. The Hebrews were enjoined not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but to exhort one another *every day*.[o] It is thus manifest that the early christians met on different other days of the week besides the first. That it was their regular practice to meet every day for christian purposes, does not clearly appear; it seems to be extremely probable, however, that they were in the practice of holding their meetings very frequently. It is to be remembered, that at that time, christians did not possess the important advantage, which their successors do now, of perusing in private the different books which compose the New Testament. Their progress in christian knowledge depended almost entirely on mutual instruction, conveyed orally in their social intercourse. As a considerable portion of the first converts (of the Gentile converts especially) needed to be carried forward from the first elements of religious knowledge, it doubtless would be found necessary to meet with them, for purposes of instruction, very often. How often they did regularly meet, for this and other christian objects, cannot now certainly be determined: but from the numerous indications that occur in the

[n] Acts xvi. 13. [o] Hebrews iii. 13.

apostolic epistles, of the close intimacy that existed among the primitive believers, it is highly probable, that their stated convocations were held much oftener than once a week. Waving this however, as various meetings are expressly mentioned to have taken place on different days of the week, it seems to be extremely arbitrary to attach any importance to the mention of a single meeting at Troas on a Sunday. It is impossible to say whether, at that time, it was the established custom to meet at Troas on the first day, or whether the meeting that is mentioned, was specially convened on account of Paul's approaching departure and farewell address. This much *is certain,* that there is nothing whatever in any part of this narrative of the miraculous cure of Eutychus, which gives any countenance to the conjecture, that the christians at Troas kept, at that time, the first day of the week as a holy sabbath.

The only other passage in which the mention of the first day of the week occurs, is in the first epistle to the Corinthians, xvi. 2. "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

This injunction relates to a pecuniary collection for the relief of certain disciples in Judea, who at that time, it appears, were situated in very destitute circumstances. The apostle wished, that "the bounty" which the Corinthians, sometime before, had

signified they were preparing, might be ready on his arrival; in order that he might carry it along with him, when he proceeded from Corinth to Jerusalem. To every one who is at the pains of examining the scope of this part of Paul's letter, it must be quite apparent, that the apostle is not speaking at all, in any part of the context, of the observance of the first day of the week, or of any other day, as a holy sabbath. The words simply convey an injunction, that *each one* of them should lay *by him* (probably at home) a certain portion of money, in order that the whole of the intended donation might be prepared, and ready to bestow as a bounty, on Paul's arrival. This direction regarding the proper arrangement of a special act of pecuniary benevolence, does not furnish, so far as we can discern, any decisive evidence that the Corinthians held, at that time, their stated convocations for worship, once a week. It is, no doubt, quite possible that this may have been the case; but there is certainly nothing mentioned from which it can positively be inferred. According to the natural meaning of the injunction, the arrangement advised was to be private, "let every one of you *lay by him in store,*" the amount he proposed to contribute. This was recommended to be begun immediately, and continued weekly, in order that there might be no gatherings when Paul arrived. This appears to be the obvious unstrained meaning of the words viewed in connexion with the context:

to interpret them as furnishing a proof of the correctness of the conjecture, that the Corinthians were then in the practice of keeping Sunday as a weeekly sabbath, is an unnatural straining of the passage, to serve a purpose wholly foreign from its original application and design.

It is usual with many of the advocates of the perpetuity of the sabbath, to attach a great importance to an expression which occurs in the first chapter of the Apocalypse, "I was in the spirit on *the Lord's day*, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia."[p]

It has been assumed, that the term *the Lord's day* was used by the apostle John, to designate the first day of the week as a day dedicated to the honour of Jesus Christ; and, on the ground of this conjecture, it has been maintained, that this use of the expression is a plain proof of Sunday having been kept as a sabbath, or holy day, when the Apocalypse was written. We are disposed to think, that this inference has usually been drawn with a haste and confidence, for which the nature of the premises furnishes little warrant. As the phrase in question is, at present, almost universally understood as synonymous with Sunday, considered as a holy day, it is, no

[p] Rev. i. 10-11.

doubt very natural to affix this meaning to the expression when we meet with it in Scripture: that it was used in this sense however, by John, in the present instance; or that this was its current understood signification, at the time when he wrote; or that the sentiments which are now prevalent, respecting the first day of the week, were entertained in the apostolic age, appear to be all gratuitous assumptions, insusceptible of any satisfactory proof.

On a subject so conjectural in its nature, we feel no disposition to speak with any degree of confidence. The same literal expression occurs no where else in the scriptures, and its precise signification in this sole instance of its occurrence, as well as that of various other words that occur in this mysterious prophecy, it seems difficult, satisfactorily to ascertain. It is certain, that there is no account of the divine appointment of any sacred day of this name, recorded in the scriptures; neither is there any evidence of any festival or sacred season of any description whatever, having been observed by Christ's followers during the apostolic age. It has been supposed by many, indeed, that the early believers were in the practice of celebrating Christ's resurrection, on the first day of the week: this, however, is also a pure conjecture, which admits of no scriptural proof. That it must be highly profitable for christians in every age of the world to commemorate the resurrection, and the other facts of the gospel, at all their

social meetings, can admit of no doubt: there has no command been given, however, to do this more particularly at one time than at another. In the absence of all evidence of the first day of the week having been celebrated in commemoration of the resurrection, during New Testament times, it seems very arbitrary to assume, that the term *the Lord's day* was then understood as synonymous with a religious festival held on Sunday, or that it had any peculiar reference to the resurrection. Even if it were certain that the expression was used by the apostle, to denote a solar or natural day, held sacred in commemoration of some particular event in Christ's history, it is difficult to see any sufficient reason for supposing that it must refer to the day of Christ's resurrection, more than to the day of his birth, or the day of his death, or the day on which he ascended into heaven, or the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on the church.

The words "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day," have frequently been interpreted as signifying that John was in a spiritual, or peculiarly devotional frame of mind, on that day. The apostle, however, it is deserving of notice, does not in the original, say that he was *in the spirit,* but simply *in spirit.* The insertion of the definite article in the English version, alters, materially, the natural sense of the expression as it appears in the Greek. John, it is to be remembered, had received a supernatural vision relative to

the events that were shortly to befal Christ's kingdom. Now, viewed in connexion with this context, it seems natural to suppose, that the words may have been used to denote, not the particular day on which John saw the vision, but the subject of the vision itself. "*I was in spirit,*" and received a revelation relating to the day of the Lord. The term *day*, it is well known, is used in the scriptures, not only to signify the particular day on which a person is speaking or writing, but likewise any indefinite time, and frequently a whole religious age or dispensation. Thus the christian dispensation is frequently called the "latter days." In the Old Testament, "the day of the Lord" is often used to signify some illustrious appearance of God, in a way of judgment or mercy. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the day of judgment is called the Lord's day.[q] Considering then the particular scope of the context, it seems not improbable, that the expression in the Apocalypse may have been used in a similar extended sense. This conjecture, (and we offer it as nothing more than a conjecture,) appears to receive some support from the recurrence of the words in the fourth chapter, when the contents of the vision are about to be disclosed. "After this I looked, and behold! a door was opened in heaven:—and the voice which I heard at first, like a trumpet speaking to me, said, 'Come

[q] Η ημερα Κυριου.

up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.' And immediately *I was in spirit,* and behold a throne was set in heaven."[r]

Whether or not, however, there be any sufficient grounds for entertaining this view of the passage, there certainly seems to exist no sufficient reason for construing the single occurrence of an expression like this, of confessedly dubious import, into the promulgation of a divine precept. Admitting that it could be satisfactorily ascertained that it was upon a Sunday that John received this revelation of Jesus Christ, concerning the things which were shortly to come to pass, surely a circumstance of this extraordinary nature, cannot with propriety be regarded as constituting an authoritative precedent, binding on Christ's followers. If the observance of any religious festival had formed a part of the things which Christ commanded, it is reasonable to expect, that the ordination of the institution, its duration, and the proper manner of keeping it, would have been distinctly recorded for the government of his disciples in every age of the world. Supposing, for a moment, that John did refer to some religious festival, we are no where informed on what day of the week the institution is to be observed, whether it recurs weekly, or monthly, or annually, or what duties its proper observance implies.

The Apocalypse, on account of the obscure nature

[r] Rev. iv. 1-2.

of its contents, was kept during the three first centuries, separate from the other books of the New Testament, and was seldom or ever read in the public assemblies of the church. The book is not mentioned in the catalogue of canonical books formed by Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, (A. D. 340.) nor in that formed by the council of Laodicea, (A. D. 364.) it is omitted also, in one or two other catalogues of the scriptural canon. This omission was not owing, it is generally supposed, to any suspicion being entertained of its authenticity or genuineness, but because its mysterious nature rendered it, in the view of the early christians, unsuitable for general perusal.[s] When these and other circumstances are kept in view, we conceive, that whatever may have been the precise meaning of the phrase "the Lord's day," as originally used by the apostle, it must, to every dispassionate inquirer, appear altogether incredible, that the single occurrence of it in this obscure, and seldom consulted symbolical prophecy, was designed to constitute the ground of a positive duty of universal and perpetual obligation. At all events, it is not to be controverted, that there is not the shadow of scriptural proof of any connexion having been instituted between the law of the sabbath and any sacred day, or festival, of any name whatever, under the Gospel. The adoption of a

[s] Bishop Tomline's Christian Theology, cited by Horne. Vol. iv. 484.

weekly religious festival, in the second and third centuries, furnishes no legitimate authority for transferring the prescriptions of the Judaical decalogue, to the first day of the week, or for sabbatizing on that day—a practice which, as will afterwards be shown, was uniformly condemned by those who introduced the festival in question.

That the custom of holding the stated meetings of the church on the first day of the week, obtained at an early period, is matter of history; and it is also certain, that this day was, at a very early date, celebrated as a religious festival, and came, ultimately, to be generally known by the designation "Lord's day." How soon the custom obtained of observing Sunday in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, it is difficult precisely to determine; but this much is certain, that there exists no evidence of any one during either the first or second century having kept that day as a holy sabbath. It is deserving of notice also, that in adopting the custom of celebrating the day as a season of religious rejoicing, it was by no one at that time contended, that the practice was obligatory, on the ground of an apostolic precept enjoining it, neither was the origin of the name Lord's day ascribed to the occurrence of this expression in the Apocalypse.[t] In the writings of the fathers who

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[t] By some writers, it has been supposed that the first day of the week was known by the designation "the Lord's day," previous to the introduction of

flourished in the second century, the first day is seldom or ever called the Lord's day.[a] Justin calls it "the day of the sun," without intimating that it ought to receive any other name: Tertullian, who wrote about fifty years later, gives it the same name, *(dies solis.)* "It is very likely" says a writer who has professedly examined this question, "that the more solemn and public use of the word Lord's day, was not observed till about the time of Sylvester II. when by Constantine's command it became an injunction. It was afterwards more generally noted in conversation and writing, religious and civil. Till

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the gospel, and that the name had its origin in the circumstance of Sunday having been dedicated by the heathens, to the honour of the sun. As the sun was called *Dominus Sol*, it has been inferred, that the day dedicated to his honour, was, in the same way called *Dies Dominica*. In support of this opinion, it has been advanced, that the Persians called their god *Mithra*, (who, it is well known was nothing but the sun,) the *Lord Mithra*: that the Syrians called the sun by the epithet *Adonis*, or *Lord*: that Porphyry to the same purpose, in his prayer addressed to the sun, calls him *Dominus Sol*: that in the consecration of the seven days of the week to the different planets, the day of the sun is called the day of the *Lord Sol*, or *Dies Dominica*, while the others are called by their simple names, as *Dies Martis* &c: and, in fine, that every one of the ancient nations, gave the sun the epithet *Lord* or *Master*, or some title equivalent to it, as *Kurios* in Greek, and *Dominicus* in Latin. See, on this subject, Higgin's Horæ Sabbaticæ. Dupuis sur tous les cultes.—Vol. iii. p. 41.

[a] In the epistle, ascribed to Barnabas, Sunday is called "the eighth day." There is an expression used by Ignatius, that has usually been supposed to refer to the Lord's day, *kuriaké*, that is, "the Lord's," without the addition of the word day. There is little importance to be attached to the occurrence of any single word, in epistles so grossly interpolated as those of this Father. Of all the ancient writings, it is now, on all hands, admitted, none have been more the subject of fraud and corruption than these.

the time of that emperor, and that prelate, it had never commenced in ecclesiastical constitution. This agrees with the notion of the present church, (of England,) looking on it as a very decent and laudable custom, yet still a custom, continued from universal tradition, *and not a divine ordinance.*[x] During the third and fourth centuries, the day appears to have been simply regarded as one of the numerous fast and festival days, which the christians of those times adopted from considerations of supposed expediency; and its observance was, with them, recommended on no other ground than the authority then claimed by the ecclesiastical rulers, to appoint observances of this nature. That this was the case, has been admitted by some of the most learned advocates of the Lord's day, who, while they maintain, that it is still a duty to observe the institution, have possessed too correct a knowledge of its origin to allow them to attempt to claim for it an obligation on the ground of scriptural precept or example. "The Lord's day," says Dr. Peter Heylin, "was not instituted by our Saviour Christ, commanded by the apostles, or ordained first by any other authority than the voluntary consecration of it to religious uses: and being consecrated to these uses, was not advanced to that esteem which it now enjoys, but leisurely and by degrees, partly by canons

[x] Morer's Dialogues on the Lord's day. p. 57.

of particular councils, and partly by the decretals of several popes, and orders of several inferior prelates, and being so advanced, is subject still to the authority of the church, to be retained or changed as the church thinks fit."[y] Those who continue to observe this weekly festival, and, who with Heylin, recognize that authority, assumed and exercised during the first centuries, by the rulers of the church, in which it apparently had its origin, must be allowed to possess a claim to consistency, whatever may be thought of their adherence to the principles of protestantism. It appears to be very inconsistent, however, to recognize the authority of "the church" in this instance, while we refuse to receive various other ancient usages, which it is certain were observed by the first christians at the same period, with no less solemnity. As early as Tertullian's time, the feast of Easter appears to have been an established practice. "We celebrate Easter," says he, "in the first month of every year."[z] It is certain also, that the custom of observing Whitsunday, Christmas, and various other feasts and festivals, obtained at a period not much later. Along with these, there were observed numerous fasts, both fixed and occasional, some weekly, and others annual; all of which were ordained by the ecclesiastical rulers, who, it is well known, made laws of this kind, at their own discretion. The

[y] Pascha celebramus anno circulo in mense primo.—De jejun.

[z] Preface to the History of the Sabbath.

recognition of the authority exercised by the church at that time, is evidently the only tenable ground on which the retention of such usages can ever consistently be maintained; and surely if we admit one usage on this ground, we are bound to admit all; for all necessarily stand or fall together. "It will not be found *in scripture*," said Charles I. to "the new reformers" in his reign, who were then zealously propagating their Judaical doctrine of the modern sabbath, "where Saturday is discharged to be kept, or turned into Sunday; wherefore it must be the church's authority that changed the one and instituted the other. Wherefore, my opinion is, that those who will not keep the feast of Easter, may as well return to the observation of Saturday, and refuse the weekly Sunday. When any one can shew me that herein I am in an error, I shall not be ashamed to confess and amend it."[a] On the principles professed by those whose notions he was controverting, this argument made use of by the unfortunate monarch, appears to admit of no satisfactory answer. If the scriptures be recognized as the only rule of faith and obedience, to be consistent, we are obviously bound to reject every religious custom unauthorized by the apostles. The Lord's day is only one of a vast number of religious customs introduced by the ecclesiastical authorities, during the first three

[a] See Morer.—p. 58.

centuries: if it is to be retained, it will be difficult to assign any valid reason for rejecting the rest.

As the Apostles of Christ have been constituted the sole authoritative teachers of christian duty, our concern, it is obvious, is not with the religious customs that were appended to christianity in the second, third, and fourth centuries, but with the commandments that were delivered to those who acted under apostolic direction. Recognizing the New Testament writings as the sole attested rule of christian obedience, the question which we have to ascertain, is simply this:—does there exist any divine law, requiring the sanctification of a determinate portion of time under the gospel, or is there any precedent on record, that implies an obligation on christians to meet for christian purposes at any particular stated time? Of the existence of an express precept, or authoritative precedent, implying either of these obligations, we own, we are unable to discover any adequate evidence in the sacred volume; and it is certain, that where there is no law, there can be no transgression.

There are two different obligations which it is conceivable, may have arisen from scriptural example that have frequently been confounded, and which it is very desirable should be considered separately, being in their nature very distinct. There might have existed an obligation to separate a weekly or any other portion of time from a com-

mon to a sacred use: this would have been the case if there had been any evidence of the first believers having been taught to observe the prescriptions of the fourth commandment, as a part of their christian duty. There might also have existed an obligation to meet hebdomadally, or statedly, at any certain recurring hour or day. A law prescribing this latter practice might have been delivered, it is obvious, unaccompanied by any sabbatical injunction; and it is certain, that if there exists any proof of such a law having been promulgated, the same precept which the first christians observed must continue still in force.

Of the former of these supposed obligations we have already treated at large. It has been shown, we trust, that the perpetual obligation of one of the positive precepts of the abrogated economy of Moses, is a notion at variance with all the leading facts recorded in sacred history, and with the general scope of the apostolic writings. That the national law of the sabbath should have been separated from the other laws of the Jewish government, and imposed on the christian converts, appears to be a supposition, alike extravagant and improbable: and it seems not less so to imagine, that it was designed that the fourth commandment should retain its obligation under the christian dispensation, while there was no intimation to be recorded of it being excepted from that abrogated economy, with which it was incorporated, and from which, the christian converts were declared to be

wholly exempted. It appears utterly incredible, that a religious observance like that of a weekly sabbath, which affects so materially the extent of christian obedience, in every age of the world, should have been nowhere recorded, either in the form of a precept or an example, if it had really formed a part of the things which Christ commanded.

The question, whether christians are bound to meet hebdomadally, we now propose shortly to consider. As it is on record that the early christians met on one occasion at least, for christian purposes, on the first day of the week, and, as it is certain that the practice of meeting statedly on that day prevailed at a very early date, it has usually been inferred, that these facts imply an obligation on christians to continue the same practice in every age of the world. In one view, we have no hesitation in acquiescing in this conclusion. It is manifest, that this custom has long been found highly expedient; that, so long as this remains the case, the practice must continue to be, in a certain sense obligatory, no one, we apprehend, will seek to deny. It is to be remembered, however, that if there exists no law upon the subject, the custom, though obligatory as a matter of expediency, is obligatory on no other ground. The matter then resolves itself into this query. Does the scriptural example on record imply the existence of any law upon the subject?

It is of importance to bear in mind, throughout every inquiry in which the obligations arising from the example of the first christians is involved, that it is not every thing *they did* that constitutes an authoritative precedent, but only that part of their practice, which we can ascertain was the result of obedience to a divine precept. The will of Christ is the sole rule of christian duty; and what that will is, we learn from the precepts and examples recorded in the New Testament. That every express precept is of perpetual obligation, is certain: it will be, by few, contended however, that every example which the scriptures mention, is necessarily of an authoritative nature. If any recorded practice of the early christians is so situated, that it furnishes no evidence of the existence of a divine law; if the practice can be ascertained to have naturally arisen from circumstances that would have led to this result, independent of any apostolic precept, the example of the New Testament believers, is evidently, of no authority whatever; inasmuch as it furnishes no indication of the authoritative will of the sole lawgiver in the kingdom of heaven. His will it is, which constitutes the rule of perpetual obedience to his people, and not every thing which the first christians did and said.

That the early christians should have adopted the practice of meeting periodically at a certain hour and day, was, we think, naturally to have been ex-

pected, and though it is by no means certain, it is certainly quite possible, that the custom of meeting statedly on the first day of the week, obtained during New Testament times. There were various considerations, indeed, which all agreed in pointing out this as the most suitable time on which they could all regularly assemble together for christian worship. The public weekly sabbath in Judea, (which, it is to be kept in mind, was then observed by all the Jewish believers,) commenced on our Friday evening, at six o'clock, and ended at the same hour on the following day; so that the beginning of their first day of the week corresponded with our Saturday evening. This interval between the close of the sabbath and the commencement of the next solar day, would thus very naturally offer itself as, in various respects, the most convenient time for the early believers, both Jewish and Gentile, meeting together for christian purposes.

It seems to have been during this interval, that the meeting at Troas took place. We are told, that the disciples resident there came together on the first day of the week to break bread, and Paul preached unto them ready to depart on the morrow. The meeting, it appears, was continued during the night, "even to break of day." That the night during which the meeting lasted was that of Saturday, seems certain; for had it been on the night following, the meeting would have been held on the

second day of the week, and not on the first. Paul appears to have staid at Troas over the sabbath, and to have gone to the christian meeting ready to depart on the morrow: and having continued with the disciples during the whole of the night, ("having talked with them a long while, even till the break of day,") he departed on his travels, early on the Sunday morning.

It thus seems highly probable, that the meeting mentioned in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, (the only proper example of a christian meeting on the first day on record,) ended before our Sunday dawned. When it is remembered, that the greater part of the Gentile converts were at that time placed in circumstances which precluded their assembling regularly during the day time, on any one day of the week, it must appear extremely natural, that the interval between the close of the sabbath, and the beginning of the next solar day, should have been fixed upon, as the most suitable time for all parties statedly assembling for the purposes of instruction and divine worship. When a custom of this kind is once established, it is seldom departed from, without the occurrence of some urgent reason for superseding it by some other. It is matter of history, that the practice of meeting in an evening and in the night time, continued to prevail during the greater part of the second century. Pliny the younger, who was

governor of Bithynia, (A. D. 107,) states in his letter to Trajan, that the followers of Christ, whom by torture he had induced to abandon the profession they had made of the gospel, gave this account of their renounced religion. "They were accustomed on a stated day to meet *before daylight*, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ as to God." Justin's account, about forty years later, of the practice existing in his time, is not materially different. "On the day called the day of sun, there is a meeting in one place, of all the christians who live either in the towns or in the country." There are abundant testimonies of the same custom having been uninterruptedly transmitted to succeeding ages, as well as of the day coming ultimately to be known by the designation the Lord's day. In all the notices that occur, however, of this practice, and even long subsequent to the time when the first day became generally observed as a religious festival, there has no case been hitherto pointed out, in which it is expressed or implied that the practice was founded on an apostolic precept.

We conceive then, that though it is on record that the christians at Troas met on one occasion on the first day of the week; and although there is sufficient evidence that the practice of meeting statedly at that time became general, before the close of the second century, we are still unfurnished with any proof of the existence of a divine law upon the subject. Whether

the meeting at Troas was held during a Saturday or a Sunday night, is a point very immaterial to the only question with which we are concerned. There are various meetings mentioned as having taken place on other days of the week, but in no case is it implied that the early believers met on a stated day, in obedience to a positive precept enjoining such a practice. Adequate evidence of the existence of a precept of this kind, is plainly the sole authority that christians are now warranted in recognizing as a divine law of perpetual obligation.

The early christians, doubtless, found it on various accounts expedient to meet on stated occasions for christian worship: and so must ever their successors do in every age of the church. Christians are expressly enjoined not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but they are nowhere directed to meet statedly at any one time more particularly than another. Apart from any injunction to meet frequently, it is manifest, that the watchfulness and fraternal affection they are exhorted mutually to exercise over, and towards each other, imply an obligation to maintain such a constant intercourse, as may be adequate for attaining the important ends for which christian association has, in divine wisdom, been appointed. As no positive law however, has been delivered, prescribing how often they ought to meet, it behoves them, in the exercise of true allegiance to their only master, in this as in

other matters, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and to guard against the credulous and unmanly adoption of doctrines and commandments of human invention. On various accounts, it is obviously highly expedient at present, for christians to hold their stated meetings on the first day of the week; and it is indubitable, that viewed in this light, so long as the practice remains expedient, it must be their duty to continue it.

SECTION IV.

ON THE VIEWS ENTERTAINED OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, DURING THE FIRST AGES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: AND ON THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO THE GENERAL ADOPTION OF THE MODERN SABBATARIAN DOCTRINE IN ENGLAND, DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

WHEN we leave the testimony of the inspired writers, and pass forward to the unauthoritative records of the times succeeding the age of the apostles, we still search in vain for any footsteps of the doctrine, that "ever since the resurrection of Christ, God has appointed the first day of the week to be the weekly sabbath." According, however, to the assumptions which it is usual for the advocates of this doctrine to make, the opinions which prevail at present upon the subject, have prevailed in every period since the first introduction of christianity.

This notion, however undoubtingly in some quarters entertained, appears to derive little support from the testimony of early antiquity: so far indeed, as we have hitherto been able to discover, it has no better foundation than a misconception of the nature and

design of certain religious customs that obtained during the second and third centuries. That Sunday was observed as a day of religious rejoicing, as early as the time of Tertullian, is abundantly manifest. Owing to the early prevalence of this religious custom, and to the festival having been converted, fifteen centuries afterwards, into a weekly sabbath, two things are now by many confounded, which have no necessary connexion or natural resemblance, namely, a day separated to God's exclusive service, and strictly devoted to religious engagements, in the manner the seventh day was observed by the Jewish people; and the custom of observing certain days as seasons of relaxation and religious rejoicing, a practice which, it is well known, became common in the christian church at a very early period, and which has continued to prevail in the Greek and Latin churches unto the present day. These festivals, it is to be observed, were at no time viewed as having any analogy with the sabbatical law promulgated to the Jewish nation, but, on the contrary, were usually contrasted with it, on account of its rigorous prescriptions being regarded as directly opposed to them in nature. Instead, indeed, of being sanctified by a holy resting from the usual avocations of life, all fasting, and even an abstinence from ordinary amusements during the celebration of such seasons, was commonly reprehended, and sometimes strictly forbidden. Tertullian, for instance, declares it "to

be unlawful to fast, or to worship on the knees on a Sunday,"[b] and describes the christians of his time as "indulging themselves on that day, in mirth and festivity." [c]Thus too, it is stated in the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, "we keep the eighth day with gladness." In adopting this and numerous other festivals, some fixed, and others occasional, it does not appear, as has already been remarked, that the christians of those times considered there was any scriptural injunction, making it imperative on them to do so. At that period, the rulers of the christian body appointed whatever new religious practice they deemed expedient, and the people seem to have been uniformly ready and willing to fall in with the observance of them.

The traditional power virtually claimed by the rulers of the church, during the first centuries, it is to be remembered, was by no one, at that time, denied, or even called in question. It is very necessary to keep this circumstance in recollection, in order to estimate correctly the importance which is to be attached to the testimony of every writer during the second, third, and fourth centuries. During these centuries, the chief corruptions of popery were either, as an able writer upon this subject has remarked, introduced in principle, or the seeds of them so

[b] Die Dominico jejunare nefas ducimus, vel de geniculis adorare.—— De Cor. Mil.

[c] Æque si diem solis lætitiæ indulgemus.——Apologet xvi. p. 16, B.

effectually sown, as naturally to produce those baneful fruits which appeared so plentifully at a later period. In Justin Martyr's time, within fifty years of the apostolic age, *the cup* was mixed with water, and a portion of the elements sent to the absent. *The bread,* which at first was sent only to the sick, was, in the time of Tertullian and Cyprian, carried home by the people, and locked up as a divine treasure for their private use. At this time too, the ordinance of the Supper was given in all the public communions to infants of the tenderest age, and was styled, the sacrifice of the body of Christ. The custom of praying for the dead, Tertullian states, was common in the second century, and became the universal practice of the following ages; so that it came in the fourth century, to be reckoned a kind of heresy to deny the efficacy of it. By this time, the invocation of saints, the superstitious use of images, of the sign of the cross, and of consecrated oil, were become established practices, and pretended miracles confidently adduced in proof of their supposed efficacy.[d]

Thus did that "mystery of iniquity"[e] which was "already working" in the time of the apostles, speedily after their departure, spread its corruptions among the professors of christianity. By inducing

[d] See Middleton's Introductory Discourse to his Free Enquiry, where the original passages on which the above statements are founded, will be found cited.

[e] II. Thessalonians ii. 7-12.

them to adopt names of religious distinction, and to establish among the subjects of that kingdom, all the members of which its founder had declared, stand upon a perfect equality,[f] various degrees of ecclesiastical rank and dignity, a right to legislate for Christ's people in matters of discipline and worship, was ultimately assumed and exercised without either fear or control. To ambitious men, new and numerous enticements were thus created "to lord it over God's heritage;" and in the exercise of their usurped authority, these exalted ecclesiastics were but too successfully educating themselves for introducing, at a future period, the antichristian power "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," and in all its full and imposing splendour.[g] As this spirit of innovation and

[f] See Luke xxii. 24-26 and Mat. xxiii. 3-12.

[g] It was not until a form of christianity was adopted as the state religion of the Roman empire, that this mystery of iniquity ("that wicked one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming,") was fully revealed. Prior to that period, there were various causes that kept it in check, and hindered the disclosure of its true character and malignant influence. When these causes were taken out of the way, Antichrist, (the man of sin,) in the form of the love and assumption of spiritual power, speedily made his way through the various gradations of ecclesiastical ambition, converting, in his progress, the kingdom of Christ into a secular kingdom, fitted for the ends of clerical rule and rapacity, until, step by step, he ultimately reached the throne of the papal hierarchy.

Under the pretence of christianizing Pagans, christianity itself was, in a short time, paganized, and the foundations laid of a system of wide-spread spiritual tyranny and delusion, under which, in various modified shapes, the spiritual interests of mankind have ever since been struggling.

To that usurpation of a right to legislate for Christ's subjects, which is the unfailing and distinguishing mark of the antichristian power, under every

unchristian ambition made its appearance in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, there is, obviously, little importance to be attached to the testimony of the earliest uninspired writers, as it respects our interpretation of the rule of christian duty. So early as the middle of the second century, the ordinances of the gospel, it appears, had not been allowed to remain unpolluted by human tradition; and even then, various inventions of men had been added to the doctrines and commandments of Christ, as recorded in the apostolic writings.

The usages of early antiquity are, nevertheless, matter of much interest, and as they frequently serve to throw some light on New Testament times, their testimony is not undeserving of consideration. It is only, indeed as furnishing some degree of presumptive evidence, in proof or disproof of any particular interpretation of scripture, that we conceive, they merit regard in any inquiry into the attested rule of christian obedience. When viewed correctly in this light, there is much less importance

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form; to that "love of pre-eminence" (the seminal principle of all unchristian usurpation) which betrayed its existence in the apostolic age, and which now is not unfrequently to be met with, in powerful operation, in the heart of not a few professedly independent christian societies; and to that blending, in religious fellowship, of the subjects of Christ's kingdom, with the men of this world, which has necessarily followed from the unnatural unions formed between christianity and civil governments, are to be attributed, we apprehend, either directly or indirectly, the whole countless multitude of errors in doctrine, and corruptions in discipline, with which the christian religion has hitherto been so grievously overspread.

we apprehend, to be attached to ascertaining the existence of any ancient usage, than to ascertaining the contrary; we mean, the one is, by no means, so certain a test of the divine origin of any religious practice, as the other is of its unscriptural character and authority. Chargeable as the first christians unquestionably were, with a credulous recognition of human inventions, they cannot justly be accused of readily relinquishing any religious custom, they at any time adopted: on the contrary, whenever any usage once obtained a place in the traditions of the church, it was uniformly, without any regard to its origin, treated with a superstitious veneration, and religiously transmitted to posterity as of indispensable obligation. Although then, the existence of a religious custom in the second century is no decisive evidence of its apostolic origin, it is difficult to conceive that any important religious observance should have prevailed in the times of the apostles, without some trace of it being found in the next and following generations. If the doctrine, for instance, of the transference to the first day of the week, of the duties of the fourth commandment, had been taught by the apostles, we should naturally expect to find some recognition of these duties in the records of christian antiquity. It is surely very improbable, that a weekly observance like this, which interferes so much with the usual arrangements of domestic life, should have been established by the apostles, and wholly

relinquished before the close of the second century. Now whether or not it was taught by the apostles, so it is, that of the existence of this sabbatarian doctrine, or of the recognition of its duties, there remains no trace in the pages of early ecclesiastical history. In proof of this statement we now propose to adduce a few unquestionable authorities and historical facts, illustrative of the opinions of early antiquity upon the subject.

In the writings of the Fathers, (as they are called,) who flourished in the second century, there is no indication of Sunday being viewed by any one at that time, in the light of a holy sabbath. The account given by Justin (who wrote A. D. 150) of the social meetings and practices of the christians of his time, is thus translated by Dr. Kaye. "Afterwards we remind each other of these things, and they who are wealthy assist those who are in need, and we are always together, and over all our offerings we bless the Creator of all things, through his Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. And *on the day called Sunday,* there is an assembling together of all who dwell in the cities and country; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets, are read as long as circumstances permit. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president delivers a discourse, in which he admonishes and exhorts (all present) to the imitation of those good things. Then we all rise together, and pray: and

as we before said, prayer being ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president offers prayers in like manner, and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people express their assent by saying Amen: and the distribution of that, over which the thanksgiving has been pronounced, takes place to each, and each partakes, and a portion is sent to the absent by the deacons.... But we meet together on Sunday because it is the first day, in which, God having wrought the necessary change in darkness and matter, made the world: and on this day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to the apostles and disciples, he taught them the things which we now submit to your consideration."[h] It appears from this passage, that the intercourse of christians among each other, continued, in Justin's time to be very great—they were "always together." Their principal convocation for christian purposes, seems to have been held on Sunday; and the reason assigned for selecting this day is, that on it, God began the work of creation, and Christ rose from the dead. There is no mention, it is to be observed, of the transference of the sabbath from the seventh day to the first, or of the sanctification of the latter day, in obedience to the prescriptions of the decalogue.

[h] Bishop of Lincoln's Account of the Life and Writings of Justin Martyr.—p. 48.

"If to this account from Justin," says an able writer, referring to this passage, "we add, from Tertullian, that Sunday was dedicated to joy, that it was observed as a day of festivity, we shall have collected all the information upon the subject which the Fathers of the second century afford. Their writings supply not the slightest information that the Lord's day was observed by them in obedience to any positive *divine precept enjoining it*, or that the observance of the seventh day, or of one day in seven, was enjoined to our first parents, and through them to all mankind: or, that the sabbatical institutions of the Mosaic law were of any force at all in the christian church. But they furnish abundant proofs of the opinion, that the institution of the sabbath was given to the Jews only; that it was not observed by the Patriarchs before the law; that it was utterly abrogated, together with the other ceremonial appointments of the law, by the introduction of the new and better covenant: and, that the observance of it indicated a reprehensible desire of returning from christianity to Judaism."[1]

There are various ecclesiastical decrees recorded in the early historians, recommending the observance of Sunday as a religious festival, but in no case that has hitherto been pointed out, is this injunction enforced by any reference to scriptural authority: on the contrary, it is manifest from several of these

[1] British Critic.—Vol. vi. p. 185.

decrees, that the observance of the day was not viewed, at the period they were issued, as having any dependance on the decalogue, or as bearing, in any way, a resemblance to the rigorous prescriptions of the Jewish sabbath. By a decree of the council of Gangres in Paphlagonia, (A. D. 357,) all those are anathematized, who, from notions of devotion, pass the Sunday in bodily mortification and fasting. The practice of abstaining from secular employments on the first day of the week, was condemned by the council of Laodicea (A. D. 364,) as judaizing.[k] In the edict of Constantine,[l] which established the observance of this festival to be the municipal law of the Roman empire, while all judges, townspeople, and "the occupations of all trades," are enjoined to rest "on the venerable day of the Sun," all persons on the other hand, employed in agriculture, are declared to be at full liberty to continue their labours, whenever their affairs might require them to do so. It is obvious that there is nothing in this edict which implies that the observance it enjoins, was regarded as deriving its obligation from a scriptural precept, which it is natural to expect would have been the case, if this opinion had at that period prevailed:

[k] See Suiceri Thess. Ecclesiast. voce *Sabbaton.*

[l] Omnes judices, urbanæque plebes, et cunctarum artium officia venerabili die solis quiescant. Ruri tamen positi agrorum culturæ libere licenterque inserviant; quoniam frequenter evenit, ut non aptius alio die frumenta sulcis aut vineæ scrobibus mandentur, ne occasione momenti pereat, commoditas cœlesti provisione concessa.——*Dat. Nonis Mart. Crispo* II. *et Constantino* II. *Conss. Corp. Jur. Cir. Codicis lib* 3 *tit* 12.

regulation appears to have been adopted, purely from considerations of existing expediency, and to have been enforced on no other grounds.

After the promulgation of this decree, the observance of Sunday, as a religious festival, became immediately, very general; long subsequent to this period, however, the practice of intermitting public labour during the whole of the day, does not appear to have been by any means universally established. It was very customary for the people, after the public services of religion were concluded, to resume their usual employments. "Paula, a devout lady in Jerome's time, is represented by him, after coming from church on the Lord's day, as sitting down with the virgins and widows attending her, to their daily tasks, which consisted in making garments; and as doing this on that day for themselves, as well as for others that needed them. By this time, christianity had got into the throne as well as into the empire. Yet, for all this, the entire sanctification of the Lord's day, proceeded slowly; and, that it was the work of time to bring it to perfection appears from the several steps the church made in her constitution, and from the decrees of emperors and other princes, wherein the prohibitions from servile and civil business, advanced by degrees, from one species to another, till the day had got a considerable figure in the world."[m]

[m] Morer on the Lord's Day.—p. 235, 236.

It is well known, that during the time of the heathen emperors, the christians held their meetings for divine worship, principally on the evening of the day: they were of course naturally led to adopt this custom, from the evening or night being the only time when the people were all disengaged from their ordinary employments. That the first christians did pursue their secular avocations on the first day of the week, is unquestionable, and indeed their doing so was, in a manner, unavoidable. Now, it is deserving of notice, that although this was their constant practice, the necessity they were under to continue to labour, is never complained of as a hardship, neither is the practice ever reprehended by any of the early Fathers as a violation of any divine precept, which it is natural to think they would frequently have done, if the sanctification of Sunday by a holy resting from all the business of life, had been recognized at that time, as a christian obligation. The necessity under which many of the first christians were no doubt placed, to engage in secular employments on this day, does not at all serve to explain this circumstance; for even after the time when Constantine issued his edict, when this necessity no longer existed, the practice of resuming the ordinary avocations of life, after the close of public worship, appears to have been quite common, and to have been sanctioned by the Fathers of that age. This practice is countenanced by Jerome, by Chry-

sostom, by Augustine, by Gregory Magnus, and others, and is sometimes even recommended as a proper and laudable custom.

It is matter of history, that there was a considerable number of the Jewish believers of the gospel, who, at the destruction of Jerusalem, refused to relinquish the Mosaic observances to which they had been accustomed: averse, apparently, to read aright that affecting lesson of Providence, they continued to retain their ancient Jewish usages, in conjunction with the profession of the gospel. Though it was the leading design of the apostle Paul in his epistle addressed to these Hebrews, to wean them from their natural attachment to their old Judaism; and to lead them on to perfection in the knowledge of the gospel, by convincing them of the natural and appointed termination of the Mosaic economy, in the finished work of the Messiah; notwithstanding too, they had long been in possession of the most pointed and affecting warnings of the fate that hung over their favourite city and temple, all these lessons of instruction and admonition appear to have been lost upon their prejudiced minds. They continued still "zealous of the law," and jealous of every doctrine that appeared to disparage the importance of its institutions, or endanger in any way their perpetuity. While, however, a proportion of these Jewish believers continued to labour under these Judaical prejudices and misconceptions, there was a considerable number of

them, who, when the principal cause of their blindness was removed, by the abolition of the temple service, shortly afterwards wholly relinquished the Jewish ritual, and incorporated themselves with their Gentile brethren. These were the true followers of the apostle, who by their conduct proved that they understood and had benefited by his instructions, and were ready accordingly, when the trial came, to act conformably to that change of circumstances, for the approach of which, it was the main design of his epistle to prepare their minds.

The exact number of Jewish believers who acted in this manner, it is impossible now to ascertain. It is certain that a body of Hebrew Christians adhering to the Mosaic ritual, existed at Pella, until the final dispersion of the Jews from Jerusalem in the reign of Adrian. It is supposed, that at that period, the majority of this body finally relinquished their ancient customs, and were admitted, on doing so, into the immunities of the newly formed colony of Elia, from which all Jews were excluded. The residue who still persisted in their tenacity to the law of Moses, withdrew into that part of Palestine called Perea, and there established a peculiar church of their own, in which the ceremonial law was retained in all its ancient rigour. The rites instituted by Moses, they maintained to be still obligatory on all christians of the Hebrew race; those who were

of a different origin, they exempted from their obligation.[n]

Of those Hebrews who conformed to the regular order and discipline of the catholic body of believers, there appears to have been a considerable number who still continued to pay some regard to a few of the venerated practices of their ancestors. Of all their old usages, the weekly sabbath seems to have been that which these persons found the greatest difficulty in relinquishing. Through the influence of their example in continuing to pay a respect to the seventh day, and not improbably owing to their frequent justification of their conduct in doing so, and recommendation of the practice to others, the partial observance of the sabbath, ultimately became very general among several of the Eastern churches, in addition to, and in conjunction with, the celebration of the weekly festival of Sunday. In this way arose the ancient sabbatarians, a body, it is well known, of very considerable importance in respect both to numbers and influence, during the greater part of the third and the early part of the next century. Socrates, the historian, states that with the exception of Rome and Alexandria, all other churches

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[n] These Judaical christians, though inconsiderable as regarded numbers, were divided into two sects, the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. Of these, the former appear to have been incomparably the more respectable. Both gradually dwindled into insignificance about the beginning of the fourth century.—*See Mosheim's Commentaries, Vidall's Trans. Vol ii. p.* 193.

devoted Saturday as well as Sunday to religious purposes. It was their practice to sabbatize on Saturday, and to celebrate Sunday as a day of rejoicing and festivity. While, however, in some places, a respect was thus generally paid to both of these days, the judaizing practice of observing Saturday was, by the leading churches, expressly condemned, and all the doctrines connected with it, stedfastly resisted. Among the general body of believers, it seems to have been the prevailing doctrine, that the Mosaic institution was, as a whole, entirely abolished. In the writings of the earliest and most esteemed of the Fathers, the sabbath is uniformly spoken of as an integral part of the Jewish constitution. "All its ordinances," says Justin, "its sacrifices, *its sabbath*, the prohibitions of certain kinds of food, were designed to counteract the inveterate tendency of the Jews to fall into idolatry."[o] The view most generally taken of the sabbatical institution, by the christian writers of the two following centuries, seems to have been, that it was purely an ordinance of the Mosaic economy, which had been wholly superseded, having naturally terminated in the christian dispensation: they contended, that instead of being continued under the gospel, or transferred to any new day, it had been succeeded by the whole life of a christian believer, of the spiritual rest and holiness enjoyed by whom it had, under the law, been an appointed type.

[o] Bishop of Lincoln's Justin Martyr.—p. 22.

On the supposition of the prevalence during the third and fourth centuries of the modern sabbatarian doctrine, it seems altogether unaccountable, that when the protracted controversy which took place on this subject was going forward, no one thought of advancing the obvious and silencing argument, that if it were granted, that Sunday was the appointed substitute of the old sabbath, it necessarily followed, that the observance of the seventh day, was entirely superseded. It is natural to think, that if this doctrine had been then recognized, it would, by both parties, have been regarded as forming the hinge on which the whole controversy turned. The question at issue at that time, however, was plainly, not at all the religious character of the first day of the week: that its observance, as a festival of the church, was a laudable custom, seems to have been on all hands admitted: the notion that its observance as a holy sabbath was obligatory in obedience to the prescriptions of the decalogue, no one seems to have ever once broached. It is obvious, that the only day then known by the designation the sabbath, was Saturday, and the sole question in debate was, whether a respect ought still to be paid to it under the gospel. It is not to be doubted that had the modern notion of the transference of the weekly sabbath from the seventh day to the first, been entertained by the opponents of these ancient sabbatarians, or had this doctrine been regarded, at that time, as capable of being maintained on scriptural

grounds, it would readily have been brought forward as an argument obviously conclusive of the whole controversy. The circumstance of this view of the subject having never been taken by any one, or adduced on either side as having any bearing on the question, furnishes an indication, we apprehend, of a very unequivocal nature, that the christians of that age were total strangers to the modern doctrine.

The sabbatarian controversy appears to have been very little agitated subsequent to the close of the third century; and, very shortly after the period when Constantine issued his edict enjoining the general observance of Sunday throughout the Roman empire, the party that had contended for the observance of the seventh day, dwindled into insignificance. The observance of Sunday as a public festival, during which all business, with the exception of rural employments, was intermitted, came to be more and more generally established, ever after this time, throughout both the Greek and the Latin churches. There is no evidence, however, that either at this, or at a period much later, the observance was viewed as deriving any obligation from the fourth commandment: it seems to have been regarded as an institution corresponding in nature with Christmas, Good Friday, and other festivals of the church; and, as resting, with them, on the grounds of ecclesiastical authority and tradition. "Thus do we see," says the learned Heylin, "upon what grounds the Lord's

day stands; on custom first, and voluntary consecration of it to religious meetings: that custom continued by the authority of the church of God, which tacitly approved the same; and finally confirmed and ratified by christian princes throughout their empires."

"It was left to God's people to pitch on the first day of the week, or any other, as the public use might require; for there was no divine command that *it* particularly should be sanctified, as there was concerning the Jewish sabbath. And though this day was taken up and made a day of meeting in the congregation for religious exercises, yet for three hundred years there was neither law to bind them to it, nor any rest from labour, or from worldly business required upon it. And when it seemed good unto christian princes to lay restraints upon their people, yet at first it was not general, but only this, that certain men in certain places, should lay aside their ordinary works to attend to God's service in the church; those engaged in employments that were most toilsome, *and most repugnant to the true nature of a sabbath,* being allowed to follow and pursue their labours, because most necessary to the commonwealth. And in following times, when the princes and prelates endeavoured to restrain them from that also, it was not brought about without much struggling and opposition of the people; more than a thousand years being past, after Christ's ascension,

before the Lord's day had attained that state in which it now standeth. And being brought to that state, it doth not stand so firmly, but that those powers which raised it up, may take it lower if they please, yea take it quite away as to the time, and settle it on any other day, as to them seems best."

In the long interval between the rise of the papal hierarchy and the reformation, there remain no traces of the existence of the modern sabbatarian doctrine.

"In all this time" says the same writer, after an elaborate review of the ecclesiastical history of these, and the preceding centuries, "in twelve hundred years, we have found no sabbath." It is well known, that although Sunday has all along been celebrated in the Roman Catholic church as a weekly festival, the doctrine of a weekly sabbath has, at no time, been a tenet of Romanism. The strict manner of keeping Sunday, which at present prevails in this country, cannot indeed, so far as we know, be traced farther back than the close of the sixteenth, or the commencement of the next century. It is deserving of remark, that the rigorous practice introduced by the Puritans about that time, was plainly felt by the bulk of the people to be a very disagreeable innovation on their former privileges: so great indeed, was the grievance and general dissatisfaction created by it in some places, that the northern counties found it necessary to petition the government on the subject. It is manifest that the object of the

celebrated book of sports, which James I. and Charles I. directed to be proclaimed, was not, as some have erroneously represented, to introduce a new and more lax manner of spending the Sundays than had formerly been allowed by the laws of the country, but simply to counteract, by sanctioning and encouraging the people in the maintenance of their accustomed enjoyments, the growing influence of the Puritan party.

The early reformers appear to have regarded the observance of Sunday as being simply an institution of human origin, and as obligatory on no other ground than its expediency for purposes of religious instruction and worship. There is no indication in their writings of their holding it to be a divine ordinance: on the contrary, it was the practice of Calvin and others, to reprehend the observance of particular days as an unchristian superstition.[p] It is matter of history that these views were entertained by both the

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[p] A Christianis ergo abesse debet superstitiosa dierum observatio: &c. *Instit. Christ. chap.* viii. *sect.* 31.

Beza, much to the same purpose states, that though the custom of christians assembling on the Lord's day, was a useful tradition of the church, yet the practice of a total abstinence from labour on it, was not to be commended; "for this practice" says he, "does not so much abolish Judaism, as put it off, and change it to another day." "There being no cessation of work required on the Lord's day, as was observed by the Jews on the sabbath," he thought that there was great danger of "this practice, (which was first brought in by Constantine with a good intent, that men, by being free from their worldly business, might give themselves to hear God's word,) degenerating into downright Judaism."

Lutheran and Calvinistic bodies on the continent,[q] and also by the founders of the reformed church in this country. The opinions of Cranmer upon the subject, have already been referred to. "And here note, good children," says his Catechism formerly quoted, "that the Jews in the Old Testament were commanded to keep the sabbath day, and they observed it every seventh day, called the sabbet or Satterday. But we christian men in the New Testament are not bound to such commandments of Moses' law, concerning difference of times, days, and meats, but have liberty and freedom to use other days for our sabbath days, thereon to hear the word of God and keep an holy rest." That these views were not peculiar to Cranmer, but were common to the whole English church, is manifest from the royal injunctions of 1547 and 1559, compared with an act passed 1552. In 1547 Edward VI. thus directed the clergy:—"All parsons, vicars, and curates, shall teach and declare unto their parishioners, that they may, with a safe and quiet conscience, in the time of harvest labour upon the holy and festival days, and save that which God hath sent. And

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[q] The reader who wishes to satisfy himself of the views entertained of the sabbath by the leading divines at the period of the Reformation, is referred to Milton's Treatise on Christian Doctrine, translated by Sumner; where will be found quotations from the respective works of Bucer, Musculus, Ursinus, and Gomarus, expressive of the disbelief on the part of every one of these learned writers of any sabbatical law under the gospel.

if for any scrupulosity or grudge of conscience, men should superstitiously abstain from working upon those days, that they should grievously offend and displease God." The festival days mentioned, included, it is well known, all Sundays in the year. These directions were adopted by Elizabeth in 1559, adding merely to the words "quiet conscience," "after their common prayer." The act of 1552 declared it "lawful for every husbandman, labourer, fisherman, &c. upon the holy days aforesaid, in harvest time, or any other time in the year, when necessity shall require, to labour, ride, fish, or work any kind of work, at their free wills and pleasure."

It was shortly after this, that the doctrine, that the prescriptions of the fourth commandment have been transferred to the first day of the week, was introduced into this country. It has been traced to a Dr. Bound, who published a book upon the subject in the year 1594. In this work he maintained "that where all other things in the Jewish church were so changed, that they were clean taken away, the day the sabbath was so changed, that it still remaineth: that there is great reason why we christians should take ourselves as strictly bound to rest upon the Lord's day, as the Jews were upon the sabbath; for being one of the moral commandments, it bindeth as well as they, being all of equal authority."[r] This new

[r] Sabbath Doctrine. p. 91.—*Cited by Heylin.*

doctrine was for a long time strenuously opposed by the leading divines of the English church: it was warmly contended for however, by the Puritans, and shortly became one of the most distinguishing tenets of that party.*

Proceeding on the assumption that the fourth commandment is necessarily of perpetual obligation, the Puritan preachers, with an imposing confidence maintained, that the observance of a weekly sabbath formed an important and essential part of christian obedience. By what authority the prescriptions of this commandment have been transferred from the seventh day to the first, was a query to which they do not seem to have thought they were called upon to furnish an answer. Their own assertion, that this transference had actually taken place, appears to have been received then, as it has been received by multitudes since, as a proper substitute for the only authority by which an alteration of this kind can ever warrantably be made, in a positive precept of heaven.

* The controversy between the two parties in the church, respecting the sabbath, was evidently begun much earlier than 1594. Mr. Strype informs us, that the Puritans denounced their rigorous persecutor, Bishop Aylmer, who became Bishop of London in 1576, as "a defender of the breach of the sabbath," because he used to play at bowls on that day. "Indeed," adds Mr. Strype, "it was the general custom, both at Geneva, and in all other places where Protestants inhabited, after the service of the Lord's day was over, to refresh themselves with bowling, walking abroad, or other innocent recreations, and the Bishop followed that which, in his travels abroad, he had seen ordinarily practised among them."—Life of Aylmer, (1701) p. 25. *See Notes to Burton's Diary. Vol.* ii. *p.* 267.

The rapid diffusion, and ultimate general and permanent adoption of this Judaical notion is, doubtless, one of the most singular facts in the whole compass of modern ecclesiastical history. At first view, indeed, it appears wholly unaccountable, how a figment[1] like this should ever have obtained a footing in the world. It is unquestionable, that in a very short time from its being first broached, among the religious classes in England it was almost universally recognized as an indispensable christian obligation; and it has continued, it is well known, to be confidently regarded in the same light, by nearly all the various religious denominations which have sprung up in this country, since that period. As it is usual with many of the advocates of this doctrine, to refuse to admit that it was introduced by the Puritans at the period referred to; and, as its introduction at that, or any other time, seems to be regarded by some persons as a circumstance so wholly unaccountable and improbable, as of itself, to be almost tantamount to a proof of the practice having been transmitted from the apostolic age; it will be requisite to inquire somewhat particularly into the causes that led to its rise and rapid diffusion. The peculiar nature of some of the leading causes which favoured

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[1] It was customary with some of the Calvinistic divines of the United Provinces, to designate "the doctrine of the sabbath," maintained by their Puritan friends in this country, *Figmentum Anglicanum.*

the progress of the modern sabbatarian doctrine, we now accordingly propose briefly to examine.

This tenet, it is to be observed, formed an essential branch of a connected scheme of religious doctrine and discipline, constructed in adaptation to the Puritan plan of "a new reformation;" and it is impossible to conceive correctly of the circumstances connected with the general adoption of the observance, without an examination of the principles on which this Puritan scheme was founded. Every innovation like that of the observance of a weekly sabbath, naturally appears, at first view, very remarkable and unaccountable: we apprehend, however, that if the religious history of that period be carefully examined, our surprise in this case, will be greatly lessened, if not altogether removed.

It was the common misfortune of that age, that the relation in which christianity stands to the kingdoms of this world, and the line of demarcation which divides the separate provinces of divine and human legislation, were, by no class, or sect, or party, correctly understood. In the view of all the leading men of that time, the object of civil government was not *merely* to afford protection to life and property, and to promote the temporal welfare of the community; their notion of the duty which devolved on civil rulers, combined, with purposes of this nature, *the maintenance of a proper and useful system of public religious worship and instruction.* This opinion

appears to have been common to all the early Puritans, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian: it was by the latter, however, that it was in the most strict and rigid sense contended for, and to the system of ecclesiastical government, known by this designation, most of the leading Puritans, it is well known, secretly inclined. With these Presbyterian divines, the revival of the Judaical observance of a weekly sabbath seems to have originated: and it must be allowed, the institution was peculiarly adapted to that plan of national christianity, which they aimed at ultimately establishing.

The plan in question embraced a general scheme of civil and religious polity, the leading design of which, so far as religion was concerned, was to maintain *a uniform system* of public worship and religious profession, under which, by the suppression of every appearance of error, whether in doctrine or discipline, every relic of Popish superstition, and shadow of heresy of every kind, might be banished out of the land. On the principles upon which this scheme was constructed, they were naturally led to maintain the lawfulness of employing coercive measures, in propagating and establishing what they called the true religion; and accordingly, they felt no scruples in proposing to enforce their spiritual sentences by the sword of the civil magistracy. Although many of their own party had suffered severely under the iron rule of a despotic government, and had even fallen martyrs in the

rightful cause of resistance to its oppressive and iniquitous measures, they were quite prepared to inflict a similar system of civil and spiritual tyranny on all who, in matters of religion, ventured to differ from them, so soon as they could attain the object of their pursuit, namely, the possession of worldly influence and dominion.

The right of civil rulers to use coercive measures in accomplishing their religious projects, seems indeed throughout the greater part of the seventeenth century, to have been by none of the leading parties,[n] ever called in question. The religious bodies in England and in Scotland, which suffered so severely under the oppressive measures of the Stuart dynasty, appear never to have thought of appealing against the injustice of inflicting civil penalties on men, for the maintenance of the sacred rights of conscience. The leading grievance of which they constantly complained was, that *the true religion,* (that is, the system of religious profession which they themselves had embraced,) instead of being nourished and protected, as they thought it ought to have been, was wickedly opposed and trodden under foot, while popish and prelatical errors were allowed to be propagated and professed, with open liberty and impunity. These men had been tutored in the belief that the cause of christianity could be advanced and supported only by the civil sword being enlisted on its side: their leading

[n] The Brownists, and other sects, which ultimately came into notice, are of course not here referred to.

aim accordingly, was to acquire such a sway over the secular power, as would procure the removal of every part of the existing religious system that, in their view, was unscriptural and corrupt, and ensure the establishment of a purified and perfect system of national religious profession in its place.

This favourite notion, of a pure and perfect system of national religious polity, seems to have formed an impervious veil over their minds, which effectually blinded them from the perception of the spiritual character of the gospel dispensation. It never appears to have occurred to these zealous "new reformers" that, as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, it stands perfectly distinct from all earthly governments, and cannot possibly be supported by those compulsory enactments, which are the foundation of the civil power. So enamoured were they of their perfect platform of Presbyterian doctrine, worship, and discipline, that it is probable, had the simple truth been stated to them, that as christianity was not concerned with political matters, so human governments, on the other hand, were not concerned with men's religious opinions, but simply with their external conduct, it would have immediately been condemned as an impious heresy, and as involving consequences that were little better than downright Atheism.

Their notion was, that the civil and ecclesiastical authorities combined, constituted one national christian corporation, on which it devolved to suppress, by

the execution of efficient laws, all heresy and false worship. The maintenance of such a uniformity of public religious profession as would secure the spiritual welfare of the people, was, in their view, an object infinitely paramount to all considerations relative to the temporal well-being of society. In adaptation to this scheme of government accordingly, and in the expectation of its ultimate realization, their plans of religious reformation were all laid, and in conformity with it, the whole details of their scholastic system of divinity, were carefully, and certainly with considerable consistency, constructed.

There being, however, not the shadow of a warrant in any part of the New Testament, for uniting in this manner "the kingdom of heaven" with the political constitutions of this world, these men, who, it is to be kept in mind, professed in all their plans rigidly to adhere to scriptural precept and example, were obliged to revert to the state of things which existed under the Mosaic dispensation; and *there* they discovered, as they imagined, a divine warrant for the scheme they had devised. That the Jewish commonwealth constitutes the divinely appointed model, on which all christian nations ought to be formed, was laid down as the fundamental principle on which their whole fabric of civil and ecclesiastical polity was to be reared. This adopted model furnished, in their view, an authoritative precedent for the use of coercive measures in furthering the

interests of that kingdom, of which its founder has emphatically said, "my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight; but my kingdom is not from hence:" and it furnished at the same time a precedent of its kind, for the unnatural and baneful practice of uniting the subjects of Christ's kingdom with the men of this world, in the profession of the gospel of salvation. That every nation ought to be formed into a national church, and that the whole population ought to be made to conform to the established form of public worship, were assumed as first principles which admitted of no dispute. As all the Jewish people were introduced into the national covenant in virtue of their natural birth, irrespective of personal character, and were thus all made members of the Jewish church, whether they were spiritual worshippers of Jehovah or not; it was confidently inferred, that all persons born in a country professing the true religion, were members of "the visible church" of Christ, and entitled to partake of all its outward seals and privileges, irrespective of any evidence of personal christianity. The figment of a fœderal holiness, derived from their parental connexion with this worldly corporation, which they dignified with the designation, "the visible church," was thus constituted the ground on which individuals were recognized as subjects of that kingdom, all whose members, the writers of the New Testament state,

are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[u]

Because the Kings of Israel possessed a lawful authority to suppress all idolatry and false worship throughout the land of Canaan, it was maintained, that the strict suppression of all Popish superstition

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[u] This notion of "a fœderal holiness," though strenuously contended for by the primitive Presbyterians, has, among their modern successors, fallen into general desuetude. Of the various religious bodies known at present by the term Presbyterian, there appears indeed to be scarcely one that has not, less or more, departed from the principles on which their predecessors constructed and founded the original system. The modern Socinians or Priestleyans, whom it is usual sometimes to designate "the English Presbyterians," hold, it is well known, scarcely one opinion in common with their nonconformist ancestors: having no presbyteries, or ecclesiastical courts of review of any kind, (the distinguishing principles of Presbyterianism,) they obviously retain no claim whatever to the designation. Even in Scotland, where the Presbyterian system of church government still prevails, it is now usual for the advocates of the system to abandon the scriptural ground which was so conscientiously taken up by its founders, and to rest its defence on considerations of expediency. In thus abandoning the doctrine of "a fœderal holiness," and some other original principles, on which alone, various of the religious practices which they still retain, can, with any colour of reason, be maintained, they expose themselves to the charge of a very glaring inconsistency. The only consistent and pure Presbyterians since the Revolution, appear to be the Covenanters, known we believe in Scotland by the appellation "the reformed Presbytery." Professing still to adhere to the solemn league and covenant, agreed to by the nation previous to the restoration in which popery and prelacy were abjured; they also, with consistency, adhere to the whole system of worship, doctrine and discipline approved of by the Long Parliament, and Westminster Assembly.

It has always appeared to us, that this small but respectable body, are the only consistent advocates of systems of national christianity on professed scriptural grounds. Though dissenters from the religious establishment at present existing in Scotland, their dissent, it is well known, is founded not on any objections to an alliance between the church and state, but to an alliance between the church and an uncovenanted king and government.

and modern heresies that appeared within their territorial jurisdiction, was the bounden duty of every christian government. Thus, under the guise of scriptural support, derived from the abrogated economy of Moses, did these intolerant ecclesiastics proceed, with great show of scriptural arguments, and with abundance of express precepts and pointed precedents, to attain the object they had in view, namely, the establishment of the notable scheme of a national uniformity of religious profession, and the extirpation of all heretics—the extirpation, in other words, of all who dared to differ from them in religious opinion, or who attempted to exercise man's unalienable right of worshipping his Maker acccording to the dictates of his own conscience.[x]

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[x] It is scarcely requisite, we presume, to state, (and assuredly to every one who, unfettered by human systems has studied for himself the writings of the apostle Paul, it must be altogether superfluous,) that there exists no such analogy between the Old and New Testament state of things, as to warrant the assumption on which, the Puritans and the numerous other advocates of systems of national christianity, (who propose to model the Christian on the plan of the Jewish church,) throughout their whole reasonings proceed. In Paul's epistles, and, indeed, in various other parts of the New Testament writings, the Mosaic economy and the gospel dispensation, instead of being represented as corresponding in nature, are designedly and strikingly contrasted. "*The law* was given by Moses, but *grace and truth* came by Jesus Christ." "Moses was faithful in all the house of God *as a servant*, but Christ *as a Son* over his own house." It is no doubt true, there was a church or congregation of God's people under the Old Testament state of things, as certainly as there is one under the New: it is to be remembered however, that though the Jews in a certain sense, may correctly enough be said to have constituted God's church under the old covenant, the kingdom of Israel differed from the kingdom of Christ as widely as the figure does from the reality, as the flesh does from the spirit, as earth from heaven.

It is obvious, that the institution of a weekly sabbath, being essentially a national ordinance, harmo-

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The mere circumstance of the Jews, as well as the disciples of Christ, being sometimes designated the church of God, (that is, a people called out from others, and formed into a congregation,) does not, surely, of itself render it warrantable to deduce inferences from the one state of things and apply them to the other. Before these inferences can be admitted to be valid, it will be necessary to show, not only that there is a sameness of sound between the expressions the Jewish church and the Christian church, the kingdom of David and the kingdom of Christ; but also, that there is a sufficient correspondence in their respective scriptural significations so as to constitute an analogy, not only in the names they bear, but in the things these names are designed to express. On the gross fallacy, however, of confounding the sound of these and similar expressions, with their appropriate and distinct significations, the scriptural argument in support of ecclesiastical establishments, has its whole foundation. Instead of these expressions being used by the inspired writers to describe systems of correspondent nature and intention, they are employed to designate two states of things which are not only materially different, but which actually form a perfect contrast. Under the former, Jehovah, the God of Israel took the whole people into a national covenant, and gave them a peculiar system of religious ordinances and civil polity, adapted to their theocratic government, which served at once to keep them separate from all other nations, and to preserve alive their remembrance and expectation of that Messiah, of whom they were ultimately to become the progenitors. When Christ came, this national covenant which had formed a partition wall, keeping Jew and Gentile asunder, was broken down, and the whole Mosaic ritual brought to its appointed end. The old covenant thus served, during the period of its existence, important purposes, peculiar to the then existing stage of the progress of the scheme of redemption; and terminated in introducing a new and better covenant, founded on better promises, and ratified by the death of that Messiah, whose coming it had prefigured and foretold. The kingdom of Israel which thus ushered in the kingdom of heaven, was earthly in its nature, and, like all other kingdoms of this world, was necessarily founded *on force:* as it had an earthly throne and earthly subjects, so had it earthly laws, which were enforced by physical coercion.

Christ's kingdom on the other hand, is essentially spiritual in its nature; its dependence is in no degree *on force*, but solely on the influence of "the truth" on men's understandings and consciences. It is established, not by human laws, but by the death and resurrection of Jesus the true Messiah, and its subjects are

nized completely with this proposed plan of national religious uniformity. It is obvious too, that in adopting the Judaical decalogue as the rule of christian duty, and in proposing to enforce the strict observance of the prescriptions of the fourth commandment on the whole population, they were not only acting consistently with their own principles, but were, at the same time, introducing a practice peculiarly adapted to promote and perpetuate that ecclesiastical domination, which they seem confidently to have expected they would, in the end, succeed in establishing.

For the reception of this sabbatical doctrine, the people, it is to be kept in mind, were in a considerable measure prepared, by having previously been accustomed to pay a religious respect to Sunday as a festival of the church. The change that took place

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not born such, but are all *persuaded* to become citizens by their minds being enlightened to discern that divine evidence by which the gospel of salvation is attested. Its throne is no longer in any earthly Jerusalem, but in the Jerusalem that is above; for there it is, that the risen Saviour sits, swaying the sceptre of love over the hearts of a willing people. The laws of this kingdom are not designed for national communities like the Jews, but for those individuals only in every nation, who, by believing the gospel, have been "born again," and have been thus taught to render to these laws a willing obedience, the only obedience the government recognizes. Thus, from its entire spirituality of nature;—from the spiritual character of its subjects, from the spiritual obedience its laws require, as well as from the spiritual influence which alone it employs in procuring that obedience, this kingdom is essentially distinct, and wholly separate from the kingdom of Israel, and also from all the kingdoms of this world. All reasoning, it is manifest, which confounds things thus fundamentally different, must necessarily be fallacious and futile.

was, indeed, not so much in the practice of the people, as in the grounds on which their practice as a religious obligation, was made to rest. The observance of the day, as a religious holiday, as well as the observance of all the other festivals of the church, had previously been regarded as resting on ecclesiastical tradition and authority: from this ground the Presbyterian divines removed the custom, and attempted to place it on the basis of scriptural authority, insisting that the sanctification of the whole day to religious purposes, was the express command of heaven. The respect that previously had been paid to the day as a festival of the church was thus converted into the sanctification of a weekly sabbath, in obedience to the prescriptions of the decalogue.

The change which was in this way made in the character of the observance, was introduced, it is probable, very gradually, and at first perhaps, was not even noticed as being any material innovation on the existing practice. The more strict professors of religion, who, it is to be remembered, were all attached to the Puritan preachers, had already been accustomed to observe Sunday and the other holidays and festivals, with peculiar strictness and solemnity; much in the same way as we see Christmas, Good Friday, and similar seasons, kept by the more scrupulous members of the church of England at the present time. As this strict and devout manner of keeping this weekly festival, would be generally

viewed as an evidence of personal piety, and as favourable to the interests of public religion, it is very probable, that in changing the ground of the obligation from ecclesiastical authority to a divine precept, the Puritan divines imagined they were doing the cause of christianity an important service. Whether, indeed, they were influenced purely by this motive, or, as has sometimes been alleged, by considerations of a more worldly and selfish nature, it is difficult now, perhaps, satisfactorily to decide: certain it is, that the alteration which took place proved highly advantageous to the interests of their own party. The strict manner of observing the sabbath, which they inculcated on the people, harmonized entirely with the austere notions of religious discipline, which at that time were so popular among the religious classes, and came soon to be regarded as a test of men's attachment to what was then called "the cause of vital godliness." Coming forward under this imposing guise, the doctrine readily insinuated itself into the confidence of the religious part of the community, and in a very short time, the conscientious observance of *the sabbath day*, was generally recognized among all the adherents of the Puritan preachers as an important branch of practical piety. "Jewish and Rabbinical though this doctrine were," says one of their contemporaries, "it carried a fair face and shew of piety, at least in the face of the common people: and such who stood not to examine

the true grounds thereof, but took it up on the appearance: such who did judge thereof, not by the workmanship of the stuff, but the gloss and colour. In which it is most strange to see, how suddenly men were induced not only to give way unto it, but without more ado to abet the same; till, in the end, and that in a very little time, it grew the most bewitching error, the most popular deceit, that had been ever set on foot in the church of England." "And verily I persuade myself," continues this writer, "that many an honest and well meaning man, both of the clergy and of the laity, either because of the appearance of the thing itself, or out of some opinion of those men, who endeavoured to promote it, became exceedingly affected towards the same, as taking it to be a doctrine sent down from heaven for the increase of piety, so easily did they believe it, and grew, at last, so strongly possessed therewith, that in the end, they would not willing be persuaded to conceive otherwise thereof, than at first they did; or think they swallowed down the hook when they took the bait. An hook, indeed which had so fastened them to those men who love to fish in troubled waters, that by this artifice, there was no small hope conceived amongst them, to fortifie their side, and make good that cause which, till this trim deceit was thought of, was almost grown desperate."[y]

This representation of Heylin's, is, perhaps, in

[y] Heylin's History of the Sabbath.—Part II. Chap. 8.

some degree, exaggerated; it is little to be doubted, however, but that it is substantially correct. It is certain that the sabbatarian doctrine became very serviceable in strengthening the hands of the "new reformers;" for as the rigorous observance of the Sunday, which was then becoming prevalent, was discountenanced by the other party in the church, the people, on account of this opposition, became more and more decidedly attached to the Puritan preachers, as being, in their view, the only supporters of the cause of serious piety. A conscientious observance of the duties of the sabbath came shortly indeed to be recognized as a distinguishing evidence of personal religion, and formed one of those peculiarities of behaviour, from which the Puritans derived their religious designation. In this way the doctrine took deep root in the religious feelings of the people. The notion of the perpetuity of the sabbath, harmonized not more with those Judaical views of christianity which were at that time prevalent, than a compliance with its rigorous prescriptions did, with the austere temper of the age. The doctrine thus rapidly became on all sides popular, and was in a short time universally recognized, both by preachers and people, as an essential part of practical religion.

As, with all those persons who conscientiously recognized this obligation, the sanctification of the sabbath became necessarily an indication of the regard they felt for divine authority, it naturally

followed, that the most pious of every religious community, were distinguished as strict observers of its prescriptions; and in this manner the duty came ultimately to be associated with sanctity of character, with the cause of vital piety. To this supposed necessary connexion between the observance of the sabbath, and practical personal religion, the transmission of the Puritan doctrine to nearly all the various religious denominations, at present in this country, and the unsuspecting confidence with which it has, by all parties, been received, seems to be, in a great measure, owing. By being constantly viewed in this important light, people's attention has been directed almost exclusively to the proper observance of its duties; the grounds on which their obligation are supposed to rest, being regarded as immovably established, have, in comparatively few cases, been examined or understood. It has confidently been assumed, that the interests of christian piety, and the observance of the sabbath are so identified, that the one cannot survive without the other. Viewed constantly in this light, the doctrine has usually been acquiesced in without much thought or inquiry, and has thus been transmitted from one generation to another, as an established and indisputable christian obligation.

The preceding reference to the testimony of ecclesiastical history, has not been made, it may be proper to state, with any view of representing the opinions

and practices of former ages, as affording the smallest degree of evidence upon this subject, of an *authoritative* nature. The historical facts that have been brought forward, form however, it is obvious, a very strong connecting chain of corroborative testimony, in support of the conclusion which was formerly drawn from an examination of the authoritative evidence of the inspired writers. On the single question, whether or not the sabbatical institution was viewed by the apostles as terminating with the Mosaic economy, the controversy concerning the existing obligation of the sabbath, it is to be borne in mind, wholly hinges. That the apostles regarded the institution as retaining no obligation on the subjects of the new covenant, has been made manifest, we trust, by scriptural proofs, alike incontrovertible and decisive: now with this conclusion, it is to be observed, the testimony of early antiquity is in entire accordance. With the supposition, on the other hand, on which the modern sabbatarian doctrine is founded, the facts which stand upon historical record, appear to be wholly irreconcilable. If the sabbath had been transferred to christians at the resurrection, its duties must doubtless have been recognized and observed during the first centuries: of any recognition of these duties, however, there remains no trace in the records of early antiquity. It certainly appears extremely improbable that this supposed transference of the insti-

tution, from the seventh day to the first, should have been made by the apostles, and yet that the duties implied in this authoritative alteration, should have remained unrecognized, until their conjectural discovery by a few Judaizing* divines in the close of the sixteenth century.

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* In applying this epithet to the Presbyterian divines of that time, and in freely expressing our dissent from the system of ecclesiastical polity which they aimed at establishing, we may be allowed to disclaim all intention of wishing to depreciate the character of those religious men, who, during the former part of the seventeenth century, so manfully maintained their rights as Englishmen, in resisting the tyrannical measures of the court party. The English Puritans, viewing them as a whole body, (comprehending Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and ultimately Independents,) must stand for ever high in the esteem of all who have at heart the cause of civil and religious freedom: by their patriotic conduct, they fairly brought to light the cause of truth and liberty as the common cause of mankind, and bequeathed it to the safe care and keeping of future generations. "Many, no doubt who obtained, an undue ascendancy among them, in the turbulent days of Charles I.," says Scott, the commentator,* "and even before that time, were factious, ambitious hypocrites; but I must think that the tree of liberty, sober and legitimate liberty, civil and religious, under the shadow of which, we in the Establishment, as well as others, repose in peace, and the fruit of which we gather, was planted by the Puritans, and watered, if not by their blood, at least by their tears and sorrows. Yet it is the modern fashion to feed delightfully on the fruit, and then revile, if not curse, those who planted and watered it." The senseless fashion of ridiculing and traducing these men, is, even among churchmen, it is to be hoped, coming to a close. Much that is valuable in the institutions of this country, and in the character of its people, is doubtless to be traced to that spirit of independence, and to those habits of industrious application, by which the religious classes in England were, at that time, so favourably distinguished.

It is quite possible, however, to be duly sensible of the benefits which these men have conferred on the cause of civil and religious freedom, without shutting our eyes to the evils of that intolerant system of national religion, which the

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* Rev. Thos. Scott's Letters to the Rev. P. Wroe, on the Evils of separation.—p. 2.

Presbyterian party wished to introduce. "I disliked the course of some of the more rigid of them," says Baxter, who was himself partial to the system, "that drew near to the way of prelacy, by grasping at a kind of secular power, not using it themselves, but binding the magistrates to confiscate or imprison men, merely because they were excommunicated, and so corrupting the true discipline of the church, and turning the communion of saints into the communion of the multitude, that must keep in the church against their wills, for fear of being undone in the world. Whereas, a man whose conscience cannot feel a just excommunication, unless it be backed with confiscation or imprisonment, is no fitter to be a member of a christian church, than a corpse is to be a member of a corporation. They corrupt the discipline of Christ by mixing it with secular force; and they reproach the keys, or ministerial power, as if it were not worth a straw, unless the magistrate's sword enforce it; and worst of all, they corrupt the church by forcing in the rabble of the unfit and unwilling, and thereby tempt many godly christians to schisms, and dangerous separations."*

It is well known, that it was usual with some of the most celebrated of these Presbyterian divines, openly to contend that the suppression of 'schismatics' was the bounden duty of the magistrate, and to represent toleration as the flood-gate which was to let in all manner of innovation and danger; as the hydra of schism and heresy, and of all imaginable evils. It was with a view to confute the 'monstrous imagination' of religious liberty, that Edwards wrote his 'Gangrena,' and his 'Casting down of the last and strongest hold of Satan, *or a Treatise against Toleration.*' As a specimen of the contents of these works, the following may suffice.— "A toleration is the grand design of the devil, his masterpiece, and chief engine he works by at this time, to uphold his tottering kingdom. It is the most compendious, ready, sure way to destroy all religion, lay all waste, and bring in all evil. It is a most transcendant Catholic and fundamental evil for this kingdom, of any that can be imagined. As original sin is the most fundamental sin, having the seeds and spawns of all in it, so a toleration hath all errors in it, and all evils. It is against the whole stream and current of scripture, both in the Old and New Testament; both in matters of faith and manners; both general and particular commands. It overthrows all relations, political, ecclesiastical, and economical. And, whereas, other evils, whether of judgment or practice, be but against some one or two places of scripture or relation, this is against all—this is the Abaddon, Apollyon, the destroyer of all religion, the abomination of desolation and astonishment, the liberty of perdition; and therefore the devil follows it night and day: working mightily in many by writing books for it, and other ways:

* Baxter's own Life.—Part ii. p. 140.

all the devils in hell, and their instruments, being at work to promote a toleration." These bitter railings, it is to be observed, were not confined to a few violent individuals; the whole body of the London Presbyterian ministers, addressed a letter to the Westminster Assembly, in which they solemnly declare how much "they detest and abhor the much endeavoured toleration." The *jus divinum* of church government, published by the same body, argues for "a compulsory, coactive, punitive, corrective power to the political magistrate in matters of religion."* It was truly with much reason that Milton said of such men, 'New Presbyter is but old priest, writ large.'

* See works of Dr. John Owen.—Vol i. p. 33.

SECTION V.

ON THE PRACTICE OF USING THE JUDAICAL DECALOGUE AS THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

ALTHOUGH the Puritan divines appear to have been the first who openly maintained that the duties of the fourth commandment have been transferred to the first day of the week, and retain, with this alteration, their obligation under the gospel; the seeds of this doctrine seem to have been sown at a much earlier period of history. The edict of Constantine, which established the observance of the weekly festival of Sunday, as the municipal law of the Roman empire, while it suppressed that party which had previously contended for the observance of the seventh day sabbath, paved the way for the revival of the sabbatarian doctrine under a new aspect, and with much greater success, in a subsequent age.

It has been the peculiar misfortune of christianity, that through a false form of it having at an early period been converted into a state religion, and through its institutions and precepts having, ever

since that time, been interwoven with the affairs of civil governments, its doctrines and duties have been usually interpreted, in adaptation to systems of civil and religious polity with which it has no natural connexion. By being habitually viewed through the distorting medium of worldly appearances, its true character and design have, to a very considerable extent, been frequently lost sight of and forgotten. The primary design of the gospel, it is to be observed, was not to promote the purposes of civil rulers, or directly to subserve, in any shape, the temporal well-being of society, but to make known the divine purpose of love and mercy in the redemption of a lost world through Jesus Christ. As that important *truth*[a] which constitutes the gospel of salvation, is really understood and believed only in those cases where the human mind is enlightened to discern the divine evidence by which it is attested, so the obligations which the belief of this truth implies, can be felt in their true force only by those "who obey it from the heart." It was for these persons, it is ever to be remembered, that the institutions and precepts of christianity were designed, and not for the promiscuous characters of which every political society is necessarily composed.[b] The practice of

[a] See John xviii. 37, compared with xx. 31. II John i. I Peter i. 21-25.

[b] Among the numerous evils that have arisen from the incorporation of christianity with political institutions, the least has not been the ambiguity of meaning which now attaches to the term *christian*, and the constant and gross

applying this revelation of mercy to purposes of state policy, and of interpreting its precepts in accommo-

abuse of this designation in its common application to promiscuous multitudes of men, the bulk of whom are wholly ignorant of what christianity is, or of what a christian ought to be. The practice of giving this name to all persons born in a particular country, seems to be not less *irrational* than it is manifestly injurious to the interests of christian truth. On other subjects we never think of saying a person is a believer in any particular doctrine, who is destitute of all knowledge of its nature; and with much reason; for no one can correctly be said to believe any set of opinions, who is unacquainted with the grounds on which they rest, and the evidence by which they are supported; without this knowledge, the profession of their belief, it is obvious, must necessarily be mere credulity, or presumption, or hypocrisy. In the same way, no one has any proper claim to the designation *christian*, who is not in possession of evidence producing a personal conviction of the truth, and adaptation to his own particular circumstances, of that peculiar revelation of mercy which christianity makes known. The gospel, in proclaiming to a perishing world the highest boon of heaven, namely, a message of mercy sufficient for the purpose of the guiltiest of mankind, and free to the use of every one, is accompanied with a divine evidence of its verity, which implies an obligation on all whom it reaches, to receive it in its true character, as an authoritative communication from their Maker. This message, it is to be observed, is addressed to men on their individual responsibility, and those accordingly, who treat it with neglect, or who refuse to believe it, do so at their own peril. To their own Maker, however, they are answerable for their belief, and not to any fellow-man. On the subject of christianity, as well as on every other, men are as free to think, (i. e. naturally free, not morally so,) as they are free to breathe; and assuredly, they are not called upon to profess the belief of that which they are ignorant of, or do not believe; and which, so long as its divine evidence remains undiscerned, it is certain they *cannot possibly* believe.

All who recognize the divine authority of revelation, may, no doubt, in a certain sense, be said to be believers in christianity. It is quite possible, however, to entertain a belief that the bible is true, without being enlightened to apprehend that particular "truth" which constitutes the good news of salvation. During the apostolic age, they alone were called christians, who credited the testimony which the apostles delivered concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and who, in consequence of their belief, worshipped and served Him as their risen Lord, their anointed and divinely attested Saviour; thus "obeying from the heart" the facts which they had learned.

dation to systems of national religion, has naturally led to a serious misconception both of the doctrines

It was the remark of a writer in the early ages of the church, that men were not born christians as they were born Jews, or Greeks, or Romans: that they became so afterwards by their personal knowledge and belief of the gospel. Through the misapplication of scriptural terms, and other sources of delusion, many people now seem to think they are born christians, much in the same manner as, by the accident of birth, they are born Britons. It is a false and misnamed charity, which would perpetuate this delusion, rather than hurt people's feelings by exposing the mistake under which they labour. In religion, as in other matters, men and systems ought surely to receive their correct and appropriate designations, and be made to stand on their own merits: it would be better indeed, we apprehend, for all parties, (and certainly it would be much more consistent,) if people desisted from making any profession of the gospel, until they actually understood and believed it. At all events, it serves no end but to create confusion and self-deception, to call those persons christians, who do not give the gospel credit on the authority of Him who has revealed it, or who remain ignorant altogether of its import. It is certain, that all who *do believe* that the christian revelation of mercy is, of itself, a sufficient ground of confidence for eternity, must, at all times be prepared, with the christians in apostolic times, to give a reason for the hope that is in them to all who may ask for it. A christian, in the scriptural sense of the term, it is to be observed, does not mean a person who has wrought himself into a good opinion of his religious state and character, by imagining he has arrived at certain attainments in piety, sufficient, as he thinks, to distinguish himself from others, and to form a proper recommendation to the divine favour; but one who is firmly persuaded on proper grounds that the apostolic testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth is true, and who acts accordingly. They alone who really understand and give credit to this testimony, can with propriety be said to be subjects of that kingdom which Christ came to establish; and on them alone devolves the management of its affairs. Were the propagation and defence of the principles of this kingdom left to those to whom the duty appertains, it would conduce greatly, we are inclined to think, to the spread of scriptural truth and true religion. In giving expression to this sentiment, we are gratified to find we have been forestalled by one of the living ornaments of the Church of England. "Many persons who call themselves christians," says Dr. Arnold, "are so totally ignorant of their religion, that they attack and revile its precepts, pretending that they are merely the precepts of the clergy. Hence it is, that so many books not written by avowed believers, are full of principles quite opposite to

it makes known, and of the duties it enjoins. When schemes of divinity, constructed in adaptation to worldly systems of this kind, are once established, their influence is frequently felt long after the opinions upon which they were originally grounded, have become exploded; and are thus allowed permanently to affect men's general views of the christian revelation. Several of the customs which obtained during the dark ages of popery, when the worst of all forms of national christianity was spread over Europe, have in this way long survived the leading purposes to which they were originally applied. For several centuries preceding the Reformation, the practice seems generally to have prevailed, of committing to memory the apostle's creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments: as these summaries were regarded as expressing all things necessary to be believed and practised, the formal repetition of them was viewed as a necessary, and, at the same time, a sufficient profession of christianity.

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those of the gospel; because there are so many persons who, not disclaiming the name of christian altogether, have yet no clear knowledge of what a christian ought to be. But how foolish, on every calculation, is such indecisive behaviour as this! Would that they would take one side or the other: that they would either be servants of Christ in earnest, or renounce him openly, and say, that they have nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth and his salvation. Happy, indeed, it would be for the church of Christ, if all its false friends were to declare themselves its enemies: the gospel would then be no more reproached with the scandal of their evil lives, and the true believers would be drawn more closely to one another, and would feel the name of christian to be a real tie of brotherhood."

That the Judaical decalogue comprehended the whole sum of moral obligation, was, at that time, assumed as an established point: the duties it enjoins, and the sins it prohibits, were accordingly enforced on the whole population, as the obedience which God requires of man. When the then existing state of popular ignorance is remembered, this use of the decalogue will not excite much surprise. That the national code of laws adapted, in divine wisdom, to an ignorant and uncivilized people like the Israelites in the wilderness, should have been transferred, during the middle ages, to the form of national religion, which was then thrown over the kingdoms of this world, seems, indeed, rather natural than otherwise. By blending in this manner the institutions of Judaism with the christian revelation, the public religion became much better adapted to the purposes of elementary instruction, as well as of procuring that servile subjection, which the civil and ecclesiastical rulers then demanded of those, over whom they held the reins of government. It could scarcely have been expected, however, that this practice, the relic of an ignorant and superstitious age, should have been continued subsequent to the Reformation; and it seems still more extraordinary, that the same antiquated practice should have been allowed to prevail even to the present day. Extraordinary as this circumstance is, it has so happened, that the Mosaic code of national law has, ever since

the age of the Puritans, been retained, as constituting an integral and most important part of every system of theology, making any pretension to what is called orthodoxy.

That the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, has been laid down by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and others, as a proposition so indubitable and important, as to be at the foundation of all correct views of moral obligation. The fourth commandment being thus formally recognized as a moral precept, the perpetual obligation of the sabbatical observance which it prescribes, seems, certainly, very naturally and necessarily to follow; as this commandment, however, not merely requires the Israelites to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, but expressly states, that "*the seventh day* is the sabbath" of Jehovah, it assuredly does not necessarily follow that there is implied in its prescriptions an obligation to sanctify Sunday, a day to which the commandment never, in any way refers. Aware of this palpable disregard of the plainest laws of logic, the Puritan divines boldly announced that the duties of the commandment, have been transferred from the seventh day to the first; and solely, apparently, on the ground of this unsupported assertion, the obligation to keep Sunday as a holy sabbath has continued to be recognized ever since.

As the practice of using the decalogue as the rule

of christian duty, thus appears to have been the source, in which the doctrine of a christian sabbath originated; and, as the continued prevalence of this practice seems to be a principal cause of the sabbatarian doctrine being still retained in the world, it may be requisite now to inquire, whether the incorporation of the Jewish code of national law with the gospel dispensation, be warranted by any legitimate scriptural authority

It is deserving of peculiar notice, that some of the chief errors and corruptions that have disfigured and oppressed the christian religion, have been introduced and maintained under the guise of scriptural support, supposed to be derived from the Old Testament state of things. The erroneous principle, that the Hebrew commonwealth constitutes the model on which all nations professing christianity ought to form their civil and religious polity, was at the foundation, as has already been remarked, of all the Puritan systems of scholastic theology: this principle influenced the entire construction of these systems, and thus biassed their authors in the interpretation of every part of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. All the scholastic systems of divinity that have been in popular use since the time of the Puritans, seem to have been cast in the same mould as theirs was: and it has unfortunately happened, that these systems have, in numerous cases, been more regarded in the formation of men's religious opinions, than the

authoritative writings of the apostles of Christ.

The practice indeed of teaching people christianity through the medium of schemes of systematic theology, appears to be greatly, if not wholly at variance with the artless and unartificial manner in which divine truth has been communicated in the sacred volume, and has ever been a fertile source of misconception and error. In no part of the Old or New Testament, it is deserving of remark, is there contained any set of principles, or creed, or formulary, embracing all things necessary to be believed and practised; neither is there ever any formal arrangement made of divine knowledge, in a scientific and systematic order. The truths which the inspired writers make known, are not stated as matters of speculation, or as abstract propositions, but as authoritative principles implying necessary and corresponding duties: and these duties, on the other hand, are not stated as bare precepts, but are enjoined on the supposition that the principles are understood, and the motives felt, by which they are enforced. In this way is divine truth interspersed throughout the whole of the scriptures; communicated, not systematically, but as it were incidentally, in historical narratives, in prophecies, in parables, in conversations, and in epistles, as different occasions called for. The Bible makes known a clear revelation of the mind and will of God; and this revelation is easily understood by all people of

plain and unsophisticated minds; in order, however, to derive that benefit which the attainment of this knowledge never fails to impart, it is quite necessary that men should take their religious opinions directly from the Bible itself, and give credit to every scriptural statement, solely on the ground of its divine and authoritative character. It is one thing to acquire an accurate knowledge of systems of divinity, and it is another to be taught of God, the truths revealed in his word. It is quite possible for men to acquire a knowledge of doctrines that are scriptural in themselves, and to continue to hold them on the ground of creeds and confessions of faith, without their consciences ever being brought into contact with divine authority. Speculative knowledge of this kind, it is manifest cannot, in the nature of things, produce those beneficial effects, which never fail to accompany the truths of the gospel, when believed on the direct testimony of God himself.

Independent, indeed, of this obvious danger, arising from the use of these scholastic systems, the fatal mistake of regarding the doctrines of christianity as matters of speculation, and holding them merely as such, is very readily fallen into, and cannot be too sedulously guarded against: it seems to be the natural tendency of the practice in question, however, to generate and increase the evil. Through men's minds too, being pre-occupied with systems of

this kind, they are naturally led to interpret every part of the scriptures in accordance with the conclusions they have learnt from human teachers, instead of sitting down, with the docility of children, at the feet of Jesus, and learning for themselves, on his authority, the truths his apostles have made known. They learn a system of divinity first, and afterwards proceed to make every part of the Bible quadrate with their preconceived notions, instead of simply attending to that voice which has addressed men from heaven, and interpreting according to its authoritative direction, the prophetic word as explained by the apostolic testimony. In all these, and in various other ways, the practice of teaching men the doctrines of christianity, through the medium of human creeds and scholastic systems, seems naturally fraught with evils and dangers, alike numerous and baneful.

It is ever to be remembered, that the gospel was not primarily designed for the professional use and purposes of scholastic theologians, but for the use and benefit of a perishing world, that, by understanding and believing that divine testimony concerning Jesus, which it reveals, men may be made wise unto salvation. This invaluable wisdom is alike necessary for all, and it is freely offered to every one: it is to be obtained, however, not by learning systems of divinity, but by hearkening, with entire subjection

of conscience, to the voice which came from the most excellent glory, testifying concerning Jesus of Nazareth—"This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased."

It seems to have been a good deal owing to men's attaching an improper importance to the antiquated systems of theology in question, that the natural method of interpreting the various portions of divine revelation, so distinctly pointed out by the apostles, has been so greatly disregarded and overlooked. That the New Testament is *the only authentic commentary* on all the divine dispensations which preceded the gospel, is one of the most important principles laid down in the apostolic writings: for, except we be guided by it in our interpretation of the sacred volume, we must ever fail to apprehend, with accuracy, the respective natures and designs of the various dispensations of revealed religion, under which men have been placed.

In order to arrive at a satisfactory knowledge of the extensive and varied contents of the Bible, it is necessary to begin, as in the study of other subjects, at first principles, and thoroughly to understand them, before we attempt to comprehend other truths in which this knowledge is implied. Now in the case of the scriptures, these first principles are not to be found, as many seem to suppose, in the book of Genesis, but in "the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." This gospel, as taught by the apostles,

is the only key which opens to us the rich contents of the sacred volume: it alone brings life and immortality to light, and gives a clear revelation of the divine character, as just and merciful in perfection, in advancing and completing the scheme of redemption. All the preceding "words of the prophets,"[e] (which, viewed apart from this scheme, naturally appeared obscure and incomplete,) have received their confirmation and fulfilment, in the coming of the Messiah, and, to a considerable degree, are now superseded by the noon-tide light of a clear and completed revelation. The apostle Peter represents the Old Testament revelation, as "a lamp burning in a dark place," giving a faint and imperfect view of the glory that was to follow: while he approves of the attention that christians were then paying to this light, on account of its giving a shadowy representation of the great truth made known to them, by the divine testimony, concerning Jesus, he, at the same time, gives them this important caution:—"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily

[e] II. Peter i. 19.

shall bring in damnable heresies."[d] The rule here laid down as a first principle to guide us in the interpretation of the Old Testament writings, is simply this: that, as prophecy was not uttered of old by the will of man, it is not to be understood now according to the pleasure and speculation of men, but according to the interpretation which has been given of it by God himself; namely, in the testimony delivered concerning Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In the anticipation of false teachers, who might interpret the prophetic word according to their own will, and bring in craftily, destructive opinions, this testimony was committed by the apostles to writing, that in every age, christians might, by attending to it, be preserved from those private interpretations of men, which were at variance with the authoritative interpretation of heaven.

We are thus impressively taught by Peter, to reject every commentary on the Old Testament Scriptures, that does not accord with that only authentic commentary upon them which is contained in the New. The apostles of Christ are the only infallible guides in explaining the Old Testament revelation, and every exposition of it devised by scholastic theologians or assemblies of divines, is to be rejected, which is inconsistent with the testimony

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[d] II. Peter i. 20.

they have delivered. Instead then of interpreting the New Testament through the medium of the Old, we are called upon to interpret the writings of Moses, and every other part of the prophetic word, in the light of the divine testimony concerning Jesus, and agreeably to the directions the apostles have given us. The veil that was upon Moses' face, has now been removed by the apostles of Christ: and in making known the things formerly concealed under the symbols and carnal ordinances of the law, they use great plainness of speech; for they, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glorious brightness of the Lord, have been transformed after the same image.[e]

It is to the apostles, then, that we are now to look for authentic information respecting the design and meaning of the Mosaic economy, and concerning the relation in which christians stand to every part of its handwriting of ordinances. To the testimony which they have delivered, we are called upon to bring every religious doctrine or practice founded on inferential reasonings, drawn from the Old Testament state of things, and, by this standard, "to prove all things, holding fast that which is good." It is by this test, accordingly, that we now propose to examine the practice of using the Judaical decalogue as the rule of christian obedience.

It is the express declaration of the apostle Paul,

[e] II. Corinthians iii, 12-18.

that the believers of the gospel are "delivered from the law," and are no longer under Moses, but under a dispensation of free favour and rich mercy; they have "become dead to the law by the body of Christ" and have been "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." They are no longer "under the *law* but under *grace*." Of what law is it that the apostle speaks thus? That it is of the law of Moses, seems to be indisputable, for, in the context (evidently referring to the Jewish believers) he says, "I speak to them that know the law." The point then, we require to ascertain, is simply this: did Paul, by the term *law*, mean the Mosaic law as a whole, or only a portion of it? in other words, did he mean that christians are delivered from the Mosaic institution, viewing it as a whole dispensation, or only from the civil and ceremonial part of it in contradistinction from that part which is moral? This important question calls for a somewhat detailed examination.

That the civil and ceremonial part of the Mosaic law has been abrogated by the introduction of the gospel, is, on all hands, admitted: that every moral precept retains its obligation under the christian dispensation, is, also, by no sober thinking man, ever denied. These two leading points may be laid down as indubitably established. The law has been "disannulled" and set aside, it being "weak and unprofitable, and making nothing perfect." As every moral precept, however, which Moses specifies, was

obligatory on men prior to its promulgation in the law, it continues, from *its own nature*, to remain in force after the Jewish economy has been brought to its appointed termination. What then is the precise meaning of the apostolic statements, respecting the relation in which Christ's disciples now stand to the law of Moses? In answering this question, it is of importance to keep in mind, that these statements have a special reference to the believers of the gospel, and were not meant to apply to mankind in general. The letters in which the declarations respecting the disannulling of the law are contained, are addressed, not to men indiscriminately, but to persons who had embraced the divine revelation of mercy, and who thus stood in the new relation to their Maker, of redeemed and adopted children, "justified by faith, and having peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."[f] The subject of which the inspired writers treat, is not the grounds of moral obligation, but the temporary character of the Mosaic economy, and the entire deliverance of Christ's people from all its handwriting of ordinances, its rigorous penalties, and burdensome ceremonies. The relation in which man stands to his Maker, and the grounds of his responsibility in the possession of natural faculties, and of opportunities for their exercise, are questions entirely apart from the relation in which christians now stand

[f] Romans v. 1.

to the decalogue, and to the other national laws contained "in the book of ordinances." Owing, however, to the adoption, by certain scholastic theologians, of this code of laws as the rule and standard of christian obedience, these two questions have frequently been confounded at the expense of darkening and perplexing, both the one and the other.

According to these divines, the rule which God has revealed to man for his obedience, is the moral law, and this law they affirm "is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments." Proceeding on this assumption, they identify the decalogue with the grounds of moral obligation, and represent it as constituting the permanent rule of christian duty. They conceive, that while Christ by his death abrogated the ceremonial law, he also fulfilled the moral in its precepts and penalties, and retained it as the rule of obedience for his people. By the moral law, they understand the decalogue, and their notion is, that though believers are not now under the law, to obtain justification by obeying it, the ten commandments continue to be equally binding under the christian, as they were under the preceding economy. In this way they imagine they are placing the interests of christian morality on a sure foundation, and protecting them effectually, from every approach and inroad of Antinomian doctrine.

There are two leading points, assumed on this system of doctrine, which call for examination.

First.—That the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. Second.—that the decalogue has been constituted the permanent rule of christian obedience.

With regard to the first of these points, it is certain, that it is nowhere on record, that Christ or his apostles ever taught, that the law, promulgated to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai, included the whole of human duty; neither does it appear that they, at any time, stated that this code of laws constitutes the foundation of moral obligation. The foundation of human duty, it is obvious, is to be found not in the Sinaitic covenant, but in the nature of God, and in the nature of man, and in the relation which necessarily exists between the Creator and the being whom he has created. As the duties which thus naturally arise from the relation in which man stands to God, and from the relation in which men stand to each other, are imprinted on the human conscience, they are independent of every written code of laws, and continue, from their own nature, under every dispensation of religion, to be immutable, and universal in their obligation. These principles are uniformly recognized in the christian scriptures; for the inspired writers proceed on the assumption, that the duties they involve, must necessarily be recognized by the human conscience, being interwoven with the whole constitution of man as a moral and accountable

being. It is this natural law of conscience, and that distinction between right and wrong which conscience points out, that the apostles, it is to be observed, uniformly state to be the foundation of human responsibility, and not the political law of Judea. The apostle Paul for instance, affirms, that the Gentiles, who did not possess any written law, were a law unto themselves; for, while without a law, they, doing by nature the things contained in the law, gave evidence of its efficacy written upon their hearts: their conscience also bearing testimony, and their reasonings between one another when they advance or repel accusations.[g] To the same purpose, he speaks of those who commit sin, "knowing that they who do such things are worthy of death."[h] This law, written upon man's heart, includes every moral precept specified in the decalogue; it embraces, moreover, every precept implied in the great principles of the love of God and our neighbour, and extends, consequently, to the use of every faculty with which man has been endowed, to the exercise of his inmost thoughts, and to the performance of all his actions.

It is deserving of notice, that the two great commandments, the love of God, and our neighbour, are not directly propounded in the decalogue, though

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[g] Rom. ii. 14, 15.

[h] Rom. i. 32.

they were elsewhere expressly enjoined by Moses himself. The first is enjoined Deut. vi. 5, the other, Levit. xix. 18; and it does not appear, that they formed any part of the national code of the Jewish civil and religious polity. In the New Testament, these two commandments are represented as comprehending, not only the decalogue, but the whole sum of moral obligation. Paul says, "He that loveth his neighbour has fulfilled the law," and "that love is the fulfilling of the law." "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, that thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The same truth is stated by Jesus himself—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In these two commandments, the moral law may doubtless, with propriety, be said to be summarily comprehended: the assumption, that it is comprehended in the ten commandments, seems, however, to be alike incorrect and unfounded. The decalogue was a code of national law, in which moral and positive precepts stood side by side, all of which were enforced by arguments and motives that had a peculiar reference to that people to whom they were delivered. Instead of it being correct, then, that the moral law is summarily comprehended

in the ten commandments, we conceive it is much more correct to say, that *every one of these commandments that is moral in its nature, is comprehended in the moral law.*

The other point assumed in the Westminster system of doctrine, namely, that the decalogue was designed to constitute the permanent rule of christian obedience, appears also to be destitute of any legitimate scriptural proof. Although it is quite true, that every moral precept contained in the decalogue, continues in force, it is to be considered, that this code of laws was delivered to the Jewish nation to serve as the instrument of their civil and religious polity. Even such of the statutes of that theocratic government, as were moral in themselves, had a peculiar reference to the state and condition of the people, as a nation delivered from Egyptian captivity, taken into covenant with God, and carefully kept in a state of separation from every other people in the world. Admitting therefore, that a considerable portion of the decalogue is of a moral nature, it seems, nevertheless, to be an extremely unwarrantable use of this code of national law, to extract it, without any direction to do so, from the other parts of the Mosaic economy, and to incorporate it with the gospel.

It is to be remembered, that the Mosaic economy was, essentially, a national dispensation of religion—a dispensation adapted in divine wisdom to the character and circumstances of a people that had

long been in bodily bondage, and in a state of great mental uncultivation; and who, accordingly, notwithstanding their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the numerous solemn warnings they afterwards received, were constantly shewing a disposition to relapse into the idolatrous practices of the heathen world around them. When that line of Abraham's posterity, that inherited the promise of giving birth to the Messiah, was rescued from Egyptian slavery, they were organized into "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation," that is, a nation separated from all others. Of this nation, Jehovah, in condescension to the people's weakness, and to the infancy of their religious knowledge, became the tutelary Deity, *their God,* the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. To this people, thus taken into covenant, there was delivered a national code of laws, embracing a system of religious worship and civil polity, adapted to their theocratic government, and their peculiar situation as the inheritors of the promise of redemption. That the decalogue was given to the Israelites, to serve as their immutable code of national law in the land of promise; and, that a leading design of it was to distinguish them from other nations, is explicitly stated by Moses, when exhorting the people to yield the divine statutes and judgments a proper obedience. "Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments even as the Lord thy God commanded

me, that ye should do so in the land, whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."[1]

Let the decalogue be viewed in its original application to the circumstances of this people; and its peculiar and exclusive adaptation to the character of the government with which it was incorporated, cannot fail to appear. It kept them in mind of the miraculous interference of Jehovah in their behalf; and it was enforced by promises and threatenings which implied the constant care and superintendance of Him who was the supreme head of their government, political as well as religious. The preface affixed to it, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage;" the responsible connexion stated to exist between fathers and their posterity, to the third and fourth generation; the promise of long life in the land of Canaan; the prohibition against coveting male and female slaves; all these, and various other injunctions and provisions, seem unequivocally to indicate, that it was designed exclusively for the Israelitish nation. Its legitimate application to any other people, and especially to the spiritual subjects

[1] Deuteronomy iv. 6.

of the kingdom of heaven is, indeed, wholly inconceivable, inasmuch as its injunctions are enforced by arguments, the force of which arise entirely from the relation in which the nation stood to Jehovah as their deliverer from Egyptian slavery, as their tutelary deity, and the supreme head of their civil and religious polity. The notion of the Westminster Assembly, that the decalogue was designed to constitute the permanent rule of christian obedience, seems therefore, to be palpably erroneous; being manifestly founded on an entire misapprehension of its contents, and of their original application and design.

On whose authority has it been then, we must be allowed to ask, that this national code of laws has been separated at all from the other parts of the old covenant, and enforced on the subjects of the new? Certainly not upon that of Christ, or his apostles: for this practice is never once enjoined or recognized in any part of the New Testament writings. On the contrary, it is the express declaration of the apostle Paul, that christians "are not under the law but under grace:" that they are delivered from it entirely, having become "dead to it by the body of Christ." It is wholly arbitrary to assume, that, in these statements, Paul speaks merely of the ritual and ceremonial observances of the Jewish religion. All the prescriptions of the law, it is to be remembered, whether moral or ceremonial, were enforced by the same temporal sanctions, on every subject of the old

covenant, and constituted the rule of the Jewish civil as well as religious polity, at the very time the apostle wrote. When treating, accordingly, of the relation in which the believers of the gospel now stand to the Mosaic institution, Paul never makes any distinction between precepts as moral or ceremonial, but simply states, that christians, as such, are no longer *under the law,* but under a dispensation of free favour and mercy.

The question, as was formerly remarked, is not whether Paul means that the moral precepts specified in the law, are abrogated by the introduction of the gospel: the relation that exists between man and his Maker, remains doubtless undissolved, and the moral obligations which this relation implies, are independent of every handwriting of ordinances contained in the Mosaic institution: as the moral precepts incorporated in that national economy were binding prior to its introduction, it is indubitable that they continue to be binding subsequent to its abrogation. Paul, however, is not speaking of the grounds of moral obligation, but of the deliverance of Christ's people from the rigorous prescriptions and condemnatory sentence of the law. This sentence was "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It is quite true, that the things written in the book of the law, embraced precepts of a moral as well as others of a ceremonial nature, but the apostle never

intimates that he refers to one part of the law more than to another. As, therefore, he uniformly speaks of the law without any particular limitation, or any distinction of its duties, the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that he speaks of it as a whole—as a national covenant, all the precepts of which, whether moral or ceremonial, were alike obligatory, and enforced alike, by sanctions of the same solemn description. That this is the natural sense of the term *law*, used in this connexion, is too obvious to admit of any dispute: and, except we admit that this was the sense in which Paul designed it to be understood, we must do a constant violence to the natural import of some of the plainest declarations contained in the sacred volume.

The conclusion at which we have arrived, namely, that the apostle means by the term *the law*, the Mosaic institution as a whole, and not merely a part of it, receives a strong corroboration from various passages which occur in his leading epistles. It is his great doctrine, which he takes every opportunity of inculcating, that Christ is "the end of the law for justification to every one who believed on him:" and that all who thus acquiesced in the divine testimony concerning Jesus, were "not under the law but under grace." "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." "We are delivered from the law, that being dead under which we were held." These statements seem very plainly to import that christians

have nothing to do with the law of Moses as respects the rule of their obedience: that there exists between it and them no connexion, inasmuch as every precept has been disannulled, in so far as it was binding because Moses commanded it. In the beginning of the chapter from which the two last passages are cited, Paul illustrates his meaning by the example of a woman loosed from the law of marriage by the death of her husband; he states, that though the woman would be deemed an adulteress, who took another husband while her first was living, yet, as at the death of this husband she was made free from the law of marriage, so she would be no adulteress though she married again. In like manner, says he, are christians discharged *from the law* through the body of Christ, and married to him who was raised from the dead. In the prosecution of his subject the Apostle emphatically asks, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." Now this is the same law of which he was previously speaking, when he states that believers are "delivered from the law," and loosed from its obligation, precisely as a woman is discharged from the obligation of the law of marriage, by the death of her husband. As then, this precept adduced by Paul to show how he was convinced of sin, is one of the moral precepts prescribed by Moses; the proposition, that when speaking of

the law, he speaks of it as a whole, without any distinction of its duties, seems, by this passage alone, to be, beyond all question determined.

The same important truth of the entire abolition of the law, is stated with great clearness and force in different parts of the epistle to the Galatians,[k] in the epistle to the Ephesians,[l] and in that to the Colossians.[m] In these and other similar passages it is declared, that Christ hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, having nailed it to his cross, and has thus broken down the partition wall which kept Jew and Gentile asunder. The law of commandments, with its ordinances, is thus shewn to be wholly abolished through the body of Christ. That the decalogue, as well as the ceremonial institutions of Moses, was a law of commandments, contained in ordinances, is indisputable; that it was the law as a whole, which formed that wall of partition, which was broken down by Christ, is not less certain; it seems necessarily to follow, that when Paul states, that Christ "hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances," and "hath taken it away, having nailed it to his cross," he means the entire abolition of the law on the introduction of the gospel.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is stated, that the believers of the gospel are not brought to receive the law from Mount Sinai, but are come to Mount Sion;

[k] See Gal. iii. 19-25.——iv. 1—7.—— v. 1

[l] Eph. ii. 14, 15. [m] Col. ii. 13, 14.

they are not come to a mountain spread all over and burning with fire, and to blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and a noise of words, which the hearers intreated might not be addressed to them: they are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.[n] In a similar way, throughout the whole of this important epistle, are "the two covenants"[o] strikingly contrasted; the one from Mount Sinai, engendering fear and bondage; the other, the Jerusalem which is above, the begetter of a spirit of love and of christian liberty. "There is, verily," says the apostle, "a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God."[p] Those who have learnt in this new way to draw nigh unto God, receive the law of their obedience no more from Moses, but from Him who addresses them from heaven, as well pleased for the sake of his Son; and who has taught them to serve him, not with the slavish fear that characterized the subjects of the old covenant, but with the filial confidence of children, and in the generous spirit of that liberty, with which Christ has made his people free.

[n] Heb. xii. 18-24. [o] Gal. iv. 24. [p] Heb. vii. 18.

These, and various other passages, according to their simple and unstrained import, obviously imply the entire setting aside of the Mosaic law on the introduction of the gospel. The notion, that Paul meant that the distinction between the ceremonial observances of the law, and that part of it which is moral, should be made by those to whom he wrote, seems to be destitute, not only of all direct scriptural proof, but of all colour of rational probability. The apostle, it is to be borne in mind, never speaks of the law as moral, in distinction from its national character and design; for the decalogue itself was not merely a religious rule, it was promulgated for the express purpose of constituting the permanent national law of Judea. It was as a whole institution, in which precepts of a moral nature were interspersed with others purely positive and ceremonial, that the law was delivered to the Israelitish nation, and, it was as a whole also, that it received, in Christ's death, its appointed fulfilment and abrogation. At the very time when the apostle was writing these letters to the christian churches, the decalogue continued to be enforced as the national law of Judea on the Jewish believers themselves; for though they had, as christians, become dead to the law by the body of Christ, they continued under a civil obligation to comply with all its injunctions, whether moral or ceremonial, until the political dissolution of the Jewish government. The Gentile converts were

exempted, however, from this obligation—from the prescriptions of the decalogue, as well as from every other precept, in as far as they were binding because found in the law of Moses; and were directed "to keep no such thing." That by the term *the law*, then, the apostles meant the law as a whole, and not merely a portion of it, seems to be established beyond all reasonable dispute.

The grounds of moral obligation being wholly independent of the Mosaic law, it is manifest, we may safely admit the unstrained and obvious meaning of the apostolic statements, respecting its entire abolition, without endangering, in any degree, the interests of christian morality. Every moral precept specified in the decalogue, as well as in every other part of the sacred volume, is, from its own nature, as has already been remarked, of indispensable and universal obligation. This was true anterior to the promulgation of the ten commandments; and it continues to be true after the Mosaic economy, has been brought to an end. Though no precept is now binding, because Moses commanded it, it is indubitable, that, as the law of conscience was not introduced by Moses, so neither have the moral obligations which the existence of this law implies, ceased to be in force now that the law of Moses is done away with. While, however, in as far as the grounds of moral obligation are concerned, the solution of the question it was proposed to consider, is thus of trivial consequence, its deter-

mination is of great moment as respects the influence which it naturally exerts over our views of various important collateral questions. If Paul's language respecting the law be interpreted in its natural and unstrained sense, the reasoning contained in the apostolical epistles, appears luminous and conclusive; if, on the other hand, the important doctrine of the entire abolition of the law be explained away or lost sight of, there is reason to believe that a considerable portion of the christian scriptures can never be thoroughly understood.

In the New Testament, the different dispensations of Judaism and Christianity, instead of being blended together as if they were the same system of religion under different names, are represented as being wholly distinct, and their different natures are designedly contrasted in order to illustrate their respective characters and designs. "*The law* was given by Moses, but *grace and truth* came by Jesus Christ." Though the former made nothing perfect, and was not designed to acquaint men how a sinner could obtain forgiveness and acceptance with the righteous Jehovah, it subserved important purposes peculiar to that stage of the progress of the scheme of redemption: it fulfilled the duties of a pedagogue, gradually conducting the posterity of Abraham from a state of infantile religious knowledge, to that Messiah in whose advent and finished work, it received its verification and completion. When, however, the

glad tidings of pardon and peace with God, through this Messiah, were, subsequent to his resurrection, publicly proclaimed, those who gave credit to the divine testimony concerning the person and work of Christ, were declared to be "no longer under a pedagogue; they had become the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ." The allegorical parallel drawn by Paul between the son of the bondmaid and the son of the freewoman, in the epistle to the Galatians, is designed to illustrate the different natures of the two dispensations; or, in other words of "the two covenants," the old covenant of Moses, and the new one ratified by Christ's death. The former from Mount Sinai, being a dispensation of servitude and fear, gendered bondage: the latter, the Jerusalem which is above, being free, begets children of promise, freed from the bondage of the law, and capacitated to enjoy the privilege of gospel liberty. The one was a shadow of good things to come, the other the substance of those things: the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which christians now draw nigh to God.

To all who have been taught to appreciate the value of the liberty of the gospel, it must be apparent, that the modern practice of dragging the decalogue from its appropriate situation in the old covenant of Moses, and introducing it as the rule of christian obedience, is not only destitute of all

scriptural authority, but wholly inconsistent with the nature of those principles which, in the New Testament, are represented as influencing and regulating the thoughts and actions of the believers of the gospel. The children of the promise are enjoined not to undervalue that freedom from the servile bondage of the law, to which they are begotten, but to hold it fast, stedfastly resisting every one who attempted to entangle them in its dispiriting servitude. They are not taught to view a literal adherence to the minute prescriptions of any written code of laws like the Judaical decalogue, as the due fulfilment of their christian obligations. Having been all "taught to know the Lord," they have all had the divine law written upon their hearts, not indeed, "with ink," or as the decalogue was written, "in tables of stone," but "in fleshly tables," and in the language of ardent love and profound gratitude. This knowledge of the Lord, and that love and gratitude which it naturally engenders, all contribute to animate the subjects of the new covenant to devote themselves unreservedly to his service who redeemed them, and thus, effectually furnish them with the motives and principles of christian obedience.

It is deserving of notice, that the objection which the introduction of the unauthorized practice in question, has, apparently, been designed to obviate, namely, that the doctrine of the entire abolition of the law, affords no security against the freedom of

the gospel being abused to licentious purposes, has been anticipated by Paul himself, who, it is to be noticed, in replying to it, does not attempt to remove this apprehension of danger, by retracting any part of the declaration, that christians "are no longer under the law but under grace." "What shall we say then?" he asks, "shall we continue in sin because grace abounds?" What is the answer? "By no means." And on what grounds is it, that the apostle gives this emphatically negative reply? Is it by stating that the decalogue, or some other part of the Mosaic dispensation is still in force, and has been constituted the permanent rule of christian duty? No. Paul was addressing persons who had given credit to the apostolic testimony concerning the grace of God, that had been manifested in Christ Jesus, and which had abounded to sinners of every degree and name. As these persons were capable of feeling the force of christian motives, he appeals at once to their sense of gratitude: and, by calling to their recollection, their union to Christ in his death and resurrection, affectingly impresses on their minds, the deep obligations arising from their belief of the great facts of the gospel. They were become dead to the law by the body of Christ, and dead consequently to sin, not only as respected its sentence, but as respected its service also. Their connexion with it being dissolved, instead of serving it as they formerly had done, prior to their union to Christ,

they ought now, (he goes on to show,) to be wholly "the servants of righteousness." "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this also, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."[q] "Ye are not under the law but under grace. What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness: and now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."[r]

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[q] Rom. vi. 3-7.

[r] Rom. vi. 15-22.

Thus by calling to their recollection their union to Christ in his death and resurrection, represented to them in their baptism, and by reminding them at the same time, that the profession they had made "of putting on the Lord Jesus," clearly implied, that their connexion with sin, both as respected its sentence and service, was done away with, does the apostle impress on their minds the affecting consideration, that christians are no longer their own, but are bound by the strongest ties to serve Him unreservedly, who, by his own blood, has redeemed them. It is in this manner that our great apostle effectually precludes the captious objection, that ignorant and foolish men have, in every age, been ready to adduce against the doctrine of the free grace, and complete justification of the gospel. Instead of trying to remove the apprehension of these doctrines being frequently perverted and abused, by calling to their aid the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism, he simply exhorts christians "to walk in the spirit" of revealed truth, and "to obey from the heart that mould of doctrine, into which they had been cast." By reminding them of the revealed mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and of all the affecting considerations connected with the scheme of redemption, he beseeches them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God; and shows them, that this is their reasonable service. Thus does Paul teach us that it is the devout remembrance of the

great facts of the gospel, which most effectually preserves in its full force, that law of love and gratitude which, as it is written upon the heart of every believer of the gospel, so is it at the foundation of all acceptable christian obedience.

It seems to be thus very manifest, that the modern practice of dragging the decalogue from its natural situation in the old covenant of Moses, and introducing it into the gospel dispensation, as the rule of christian duty, is not only at variance with the declarations of the apostles respecting the entire abolition of the law, but also wholly inconsistent with the nature of those principles, which in the New Testament are represented as influencing and regulating the conduct of Christ's disciples. In this unauthorized practice, the relic of an ignorant age, the doctrine of a christian sabbath appears to have had its origin; and to its credulous retention, the continued prevalence of this sabbatarian doctrine seems to be in a considerable measure attributable. The doctrine of a christian sabbath, it is obvious, is not an insulated point having no relation to other scriptural questions; it formed an integral part of all those systems of divinity, which the Puritan divines constructed in adaptation to that worldly system of ecclesiastical polity, which they wished to introduce; and it has been a good deal owing to the mutual support which several of the unscriptural notions broached by these Judaizing divines, have

yielded to each other, that they have been allowed so long to prevail in the world. As the Puritan doctrine of the existing obligation of the fourth commandment, seemed naturally to follow from the retention of the decalogue as the rule of christian duty, in like manner, the practice of using this national code of laws as the standard of obedience under the gospel, has prevented the full reception of the apostolic doctrine of the entire abolition of the law. It is incredible, that the distinct and repeated declarations of Paul on this point, should have been so long and so *studiously* evaded, had the Puritan doctrine of a christian sabbath not stood in the way. Because, however, it was plainly perceived, that, if the full meaning of the apostolic statements on this head were admitted, the sabbatarian doctrine would be entirely subverted, it was found necessary to have recourse to unnatural and unauthorized distinctions between one part of the law and another, by the help of which, the natural and unstrained meaning of the apostle's language has continued to be explained away, and seriously misrepresented.

Thus have these two practices, the use of the decalogue as the rule of christian duty, and the observance of a weekly sabbath, served to support each other, and to perpetuate in concert, scriptural misconception and error. It is not to be doubted, that in numerous and various ways, these unscriptural

practices have greatly impeded the progress of divine truth. They have contributed to retain the professors of christianity under the dominion of human creeds and scholastic schemes of theology, which have too long been allowed to usurp that place which exclusively belongs to the apostles of Jesus Christ. They have led men to confound things which materially differ;—the old covenant of Moses, and the new covenant ratified by Christ's death; and to intermix Judaism with Christianity, in a manner entirely at variance with the peculiar relation in which they stand to each other. According to the apostles, Judaism was introductory to Christianity; and having received in Christ's advent and finished work its appointed fulfilment, is now entirely done away with. According to the system of doctrine laid down by the school of divines referred to, they are merely different dispensations of the same "covenant of grace or redemption," a covenant supposed to have been made in eternity, but which, as it is not once mentioned, either in the Old Testament or the New, we may safely pronounce to be purely a figment of human invention. Viewed through this fictitious medium, the old and new covenants so strikingly contrasted by the apostles, are represented as being substantially the same; and the language of the inspired writers respecting the abolition of the law, is rendered perplexingly ambiguous, requiring to be constantly understood in a sense at

variance with its unstrained and most obvious import, while some of the most important reasoning contained in Paul's writings, is seriously enervated and obscured. When, however, we simply follow the natural plan of interpretation, *that the natural sense of the language was the meaning designed to be expressed by the writers*, the reasoning contained in the apostolic epistles appears uniformly consistent and luminous; and all the various dispensations of religion spoken of in the Old Testament, are seen to harmonize in advancing that great scheme of redemption, the nature, as well as the completion of which, is first fully and clearly revealed in the New.

The Old Testament revelation necessarily appeared very obscure and incomplete of itself; for accompanied, as it undoubtedly was, with manifold incontrovertible evidences of divine authority, it did not receive its true interpretation or chief confirmation, until it terminated in the finished work of Jesus, the true Messiah. As in Christ's advent and death it received its designed verification, so now, having received this conclusive evidence, it furnishes in its turn, a most powerful and decisive testimony to the person and work of Him, the purpose of whose coming, it had previously, by types and carnal ordinances, adumbrated and foretold. As Judaism and Christianity, in this manner powerfully confirm each other, so do they furnish mutual illustrations of their respective characters and designs. The law received

its verification and fulfilment in the work of the Messiah, who, by finishing the work given him to do, became the end of it for justification to every one who believed on his name. By means of the explications given by the apostles, of the carnal ordinances of the law, we now distinctly perceive the meaning of those earthly figures and shadows, which were as a veil upon the face of Moses, under which the realities of the gospel were formerly concealed. Thus do we learn, that what *the law*[a] could not accomplish in that it was weak through the flesh, God hath by the gospel of his Son effected; for He sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, a sin offering, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled by those who have been taught to serve God no longer with a slavish fear, according to the letter of the law, but with the filial confidence becoming the subjects of

[a] It is usual, we are aware, to interpret the word *law* in this passage as denoting merely the moral law:—that law written on man's heart, which constitutes the universal rule of duty to intelligent creatures. As the apostle, however, has been reasoning in the preceding context about the law of Moses, (that law which, he assumes, the individuals he was addressing were familiar with, "I speak to them that know the law,") it seems much more natural to interpret the expression as simply referring to the whole Mosaic dispensation, without any distinction of its duties; and among these duties, it is to be remembered, the immutable principles of moral obligation were included. The term *law* is, no doubt, used in scripture with considerable latitude of signification; but the scope of the context seldom or ever fails to point readily and distinctly to its precise intended application. Its primary meaning, namely, *the authoritative revelation of the will of a superior for the obedience of those under him*, enters into all the senses in which it is employed. Thus we read, that where

gospel freedom,—in the newness of the spirit of the law, even that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

" there is no law there is no transgression." In this primary sense, it is with evident propriety used to denote the whole revealed will of God as communicated to us in his word. See Psalm i. 2. xix. 7. cxix. *passim*; and in the same original sense, the gentiles are stated to be without *the law*. Rom. ii. 14; that is, they were without any written revelation, and under no law save the natural law of conscience. In the New Testament, the usual application of the term is to the Mosaic institution as distinguished from the gospel, John i. 17. Acts xxv. 8. Gal. iii. 19: and from this sense it naturally derived another, namely, a designation for the Books of Moses, in which the institutions of the Jewish economy were described in distinction from the other books of scripture. Thus Jesus said, " All things must be fulfilled that are written in *the law* of Moses, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets concerning me;" and to the same effect Paul states, that the method of a sinner's acceptance with God, revealed in the gospel, " is witnessed by *the law* and the prophets."

SECTION VI.

THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE MODERN SABBATH IS SUPPOSED TO REST, EXAMINED IN DETAIL.

HERE we might terminate the inquiry we proposed to institute, respecting the original design and existing obligation of the sabbatical institution. From all the prescriptions of the law of Moses, from the law of the sabbath as well as from every other handwriting contained in the book of ordinances, christians are declared to be wholly delivered. The gospel has disannulled the commandment going before: and though every moral precept the Mosaic law specifies, and all moral precepts whatever continue from their own nature in force, there is no precept now binding merely on account of Moses having commanded it. As there has been no sabbatical observance prescribed by Christ or his apostles, we may warrantably conclude, that the believers of the gospel are under no obligation to observe any one day as more holy than another. These are plainly the real points on which the sabbatarian question hinges: there are various other points, however, which it is usual to adduce, as having a bearing on the subject, that by some may be regarded as requiring further consideration.

It is doubtless, not a little surprising, that an observance so destitute of all legitimate scriptural proof, as the modern sabbath manifestly is, should have ever obtained a general prevalence in the world: and it seems not less so, that it should continue still to prevail among persons who profess to recognize no authority in matters of faith and practice, save the authority of the sacred volume. That the obligation of this observance continues to be unhesitatingly recognized by the great bulk of the professedly christian community, is a fact too obvious to admit of being questioned: the precise grounds on which the duty is, by different persons, supposed to rest are, however, by no means so clear; and are somewhat difficult to ascertain. With many, we apprehend, the general prevalence of the practice furnishes the chief and actual evidence on which they found their belief of its divine authority. They conceive it to be altogether incredible, that a doctrine so generally believed by religious persons, should have obtained the prevalence it has done, if it had not been taught in the sacred writings. To vague notions of this kind, and especially to a confident but erroneous persuasion entertained, of the universal prevalence of the observance in all past ages, its credulous recognition at the present time is apparently principally to be attributed. There are many, again, who seem to think, that the manifest and universally acknowledged expediency of

observing a weekly day of public rest, is an unequivocal proof of the divine origin of the modern doctrine. That the observance of the sabbath is indispensable to the interests of religion, is regarded by these persons as a point not to be called in question: every argument, accordingly, which impugns the divine institution of this observance, is jealously watched, and strenuously opposed, being viewed as an attack upon the cause of christian piety.

There are few errors, we apprehend, into which men are more apt to fall, in the formation of their religious opinions, than that of allowing their predilections and prejudices in favour of a certain conclusion to bias their minds, in the interpretation of scriptural evidence. When a person is once firmly convinced that a particular conclusion is essential to his own religious well-being, or to that of mankind in general, there is no degree of evidence in favour of opposite sentiments, short of absolute demonstration, which his mind, under the powerful impulse that is felt to adhere to its own prepossessions, will not resist. It is obvious too, that persons powerfully impressed with a conviction, that any religious object they are pursuing, is an undoubtedly good and important one, are not very apt to scrutinize with much care, the precise lawfulness of all the means which go to support it. This temptation to pursue the accomplishment of a supposed *good end* by *means*, which, were it not for the laudable purpose to which

they are applied, would in themselves seem barely warrantable, is doubtless one of the most insidious, and at the same time one of the most powerful inducements to deal unfairly with evidence, to which the human mind is exposed.[t] That there is a considerable number of persons who are sincerely persuaded, that the doctrine of a christian sabbath is supported by adequate scriptural evidence, we by no means wish to dispute: of the greater number of those however, who have professedly advocated this notion, it is to be observed, that they have assumed, with so great confidence, the indispensable necessity of the observance to the interests of religion, that they seem to have imagined, it was their bounden duty to discover every semblance of evidence that would contribute to support their own view of the subject. Their object, in discussing the question, appears to have been, not so much to ascertain on which side the truth lay, as to collect and adduce arguments of all sorts and qualities, which might serve to confirm their own previously formed opinions. As among the arguments which these ingenious advocates of the Puritan sabbath have discovered, there occur several, of which there has hitherto been no suitable opportunity of directly noticing, it may now be proper to consider, more particularly than we have

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[t] For an able illustration of this point see Whately's Errors of Romanism—Chap. "On Pious Frauds."

yet done, the validity of the grounds on which this doctrine is, in modern times, usually made to rest.

I.—The most prevailing reason apparently for recognizing the authority of this observance, is the assumption, that the fourth commandment is of universal and perpetual obligation. This commandment required those to whom it was delivered, to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy; and as the same obligation is considered to be still binding, it is supposed that this duty is complied with, by keeping *the first day* of the week as a holy sabbath.

It is deserving of notice, that in the numerous publications which have appeared, treating of the "sanctification of the sabbath," the usual design of the writers has been simply to explain the duties required by the fourth commandment, and to enforce their careful observance, by the various promises and threatenings by which the law was sanctioned under the Mosaic dispensation: the obligation of the precept, and the transference of its duties from the seventh day to the first, have been almost invariably assumed to be settled points which admit of no dispute.

It has already been shown that the assumption on which this sabbatarian doctrine is founded, is unsupported by any legitimate scriptural proof: it has also been shown, that the notion of the decalogue having been constituted the permanent rule of christian duty, is not only at variance with the statements

of the apostles respecting the entire abolition of the law, but wholly inconsistent with the nature of christian liberty, and with those principles of christian love and gratitude, which, in the New Testament, are represented as influencing the believers of the gospel.

Were we to admit, however, that the perpetual obligation of the fourth commandment is a doctrine capable of scriptural proof, we should still be unable to discern in what way it can be warrantably inferred, that there arises from this commandment an obligation to sanctify *the first day* of the week,—a day to which its prescriptions never once refer. The fourth commandment expressly states that "*the seventh day is the sabbath* of the Lord thy God." To deduce, then, from a precept which specifies that the *seventh* day is the sabbath of Jehovah, an obligation to keep *the first*, or any other day holy, is surely not less presumptuous, than it is palpably illogical and absurd. It will be difficult to assign any reason for drawing from the contents of this commandment the inference, that the first day of the week ought to be sanctified, which would not be equally valid for deducing from the same premises the conclusion, that the second or third day of the week ought to be sanctified. If it be warrantable to alter the prescriptions of a positive divine precept like this, by substituting another day altogether for the day specified in the precept, we may, on the same grounds, proceed to alter, at our own discretion,

every positive precept in the sacred volume, in accommodation to our own taste and convenience. Before, then, we can recognize an obligation to sanctify the first day of the week, in obedience to the fourth commandment, we require to be distinctly informed by what authority its duties have been transferred from the seventh day to the first:—we require to be informed, moreover, by what authority the duties prescribed in the commandment, the reasons assigned for its ordination, and the penalty originally annexed to its violation, have been all either partially disregarded, or wholly set aside.

The law of the sabbath, it is to be remembered, was originally delivered to the Israelites as "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"—a people separated for peculiar purposes to God's service, and placed under his special care and protection: it was given to be "a sign," distinguishing this people from every other nation, and constituted part of that "middle wall of partition," which was ultimately "broken down" by Christ. As the distinction kept up between Jew and Gentile, by this "sign," and other ordinances, has been abolished by the introduction of the gospel, one of the special causes of its institution is, consequently, entirely removed. In addition to this, it is to be considered, that the observance of the sabbath was designed, among other reasons,

to commemorate the completion of the work of creation on *the seventh day:* it is impossible, therefore, that this purpose can be answered, if its duties be observed on any other day; neither can any new reason for keeping this or any other sabbath, be introduced, without divine authority. It is certain that there is no divine precept on record, enjoining the commemoration of the work of Creation on the first day of the week, or authorizing the introduction of the commemoration of Christ's resurrection, or that of any similar event, as a reason for observing Sunday as a holy sabbath. The rigorous prescriptions of the sabbatical institution, it is to be considered, moreover, were in entire accordance with the nature and design of the old covenant; being adapted, in conjunction with the other Mosaic hand-writing of ordinances, to produce that servile frame of mind, which was imposed as a yoke of bondage upon all under that dispensation, for purposes peculiar to the pedagogical condition of the people under it. The observance of the weekly sabbath, as a day of *holy rest,* was literally and strictly enforced on the whole population; so rigidly so, that the people were prohibited from "kindling a fire throughout their habitations upon the sabbath day;"[u] and every violation of the law constituted a capital crime, subjecting the guilty person to the penalty of death.[x]

[u] Exod. xxxv. 3.

[x] Exod. xxxi. 15.—xxxv. 2.

All these things—the day specified in the commandment, the rigorous prescriptions it enacts, the penalty annexed to its violation, were every one of them strictly complied with, by that people to whom the ordinance was originally delivered; and if the law continues to be still obligatory, it will not be easy to assign any valid reason for altering and accommodating its prescriptions to meet men's modern notions of convenience.

Whatever other reasons then may be adduced in support of the modern sabbath, it seems to be utterly unwarrantable to infer its obligation from the fourth commandment. To maintain, indeed, that the sabbatical ordinance delivered to the Jewish nation is not abrogated, is to introduce the obligation of the whole Mosaic ritual; for all the positive precepts of Moses are declared by Paul, to stand or fall on the same foundation.

II.—In proof of the perpetuity of the sabbath, it has been alleged, that as this precept was spoken, together with the other nine precepts of the decalogue, with an awful voice, from the midst of the thunders at Mount Sinai, and was written by the finger of God on one of the two tables of stone, fashioned by the hand of Jehovah himself, it is to be regarded as one of the commands of the moral law, and as binding accordingly on men of every age and country.[y]

[y] Dwight's Theology, Serm. CV.

It has already been shown, that the notion of the moral law being comprehended in the ten commandments, is alike incorrect and unfounded. The decalogue may, with propriety, be viewed as a summary of the political law of Judea, but all the circumstances connected with it—"the kingdom of priests," to whom it was delivered, the peculiar motives by which it was prefaced, the particular promises and threatenings by which it was sanctioned, its contrived adaptation to that theocratic polity with which it was incorporated, all forbid the supposition that it was designed to constitute the perpetual code of universal moral obligation, and much less the standard of gospel obedience.

It seems to be entirely futile to adduce the extraordinary circumstances which attended the promulgation of this code of laws, as a reason for regarding its prescriptions as being of universal and perpetual obligation. That it was "by divine contrivance and design," that the decalogue was written by the finger of Jehovah on tables of stone, is doubtless not to be questioned: this particular design, however, we are to ascertain from legitimate scriptural evidence, and not from the conjectures of speculative divines. The reasons for the decalogue having been spoken with an awful and audible voice, from the midst of the thunderings and lightnings at Mount Sinai, we are distinctly

told, in the Epistle to the Hebrews:[a] we are there taught too, that the believing Hebrews were not again brought to receive a law from Mount Sinai, but that they were now brought to Mount Sion, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. And elsewhere, we are instructed, that the subjects of this new covenant have their laws written no longer upon tables of stone, but upon the fleshly tablets of the heart.[b] Independent of these conclusive considerations, it is to be remembered, that the words, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," were written on the same tables of stone upon which the ten commandments were written. Now, though these words were very significant and impressive in their original application to the Israelites, it is not easy to see their meaning in reference to any other people.

That every moral precept specified in the decalogue is, from its own nature, of perpetual obligation, is on all hands admitted: it does not follow from this, however, that the fourth commandment is a portion of the moral law. If it be a part of the moral law, it must necessarily be moral in its own nature; and the question, whether or not this is the case, is to be ascertained, not by indulging in con-

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[a] Heb. xii. [b] 2 Cor. iii.

jectures about the design of the thunderings that accompanied its delivery, but only in the same way as we ascertain the nature of all other precepts whatever, namely, by the moral judgment of mankind.

Clearly to conceive of the distinction that exists between moral and positive precepts, is of the last importance in all discussions of this nature. This distinction is neither subtle nor unsound, as some writers would represent it, with a view, apparently, of evading what they are unable, satisfactorily, to answer: it is plain and pertinent to the point in question; and, existing as it does in the nature of things, except it be kept accurately in view, the mind must be greatly misled, by confounding things which materially differ in their nature; and the grounds and extent of human obligation must ever be very superficially and inaccurately understood. All duties are termed moral, it is to be remembered, which are right in themselves, and which, on account of the human conscience recognizing them as being thus right, are of universal obligation, independent of any enactment. To love God, to do justly, to speak the truth, and similar obligations are, on this account, called moral duties. Those duties, on the other hand, are called positive, which derive their obligation solely from their being commanded. The ordinance of the Lord's supper, for instance, is called a positive duty, because the particular use of

bread and wine prescribed in that ordinance, would not have been obligatory on Christ's disciples at all, except it had been specified and enjoined on them: thus, while moral duties are commanded, *because they are right*,—positive duties are right, solely *because they are commanded.* Whether then is the sanctification of the sabbath day, a precept of a moral or of a positive nature? That the worship and service of the Divine Being is a moral obligation, is a truth consonant with the clearest dictates of the human conscience: that the sanctification, or setting apart of a determinate portion of time from a common to a sacred use, must be a duty purely positive in its nature, seems to be a proposition not less clear and certain. The fourth commandment required the Jewish nation to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, and expressly stated that the *seventh day* was the sabbath of Jehovah. Now that this was purely a positive enactment, seems to be indisputable, inasmuch as the observance it prescribed became a duty, solely on account of the law having been promulgated. To sanctify a determinate portion of time is plainly not an obligation recognizable as right in itself apart from any revealed law, as all moral duties are. Antecedent to the promulgation of the law, enjoining the observance of the seventh day, so far as men's knowledge of the matter went, it must necessarily have appeared a matter of indifference, whether the sixth, or the seventh, or the

eighth day was to be ordained a holy sabbath. As, therefore, an obligation of this kind could not possibly have been known without an express precept prescribing it, upon such a precept alone its whole obligation is manifestly founded. We conceive then, that as the law of Moses, and that law alone made it obligatory on the Jewish people, to keep the seventh day holy; the observance of the sabbath day, prescribed in the fourth commandment, is a duty distinctly of a positive nature, and obligatory accordingly, on those alone on whom it has been enjoined.

By some writers it has been maintained, that "the fourth commandment is of a moral nature no less than the others, and indispensable to all the children of Adam," on the ground that *the ends* for which *they conceive* the sabbath was ordained, namely, "to give the labouring classes of mankind an opportunity of resting from toil, to furnish an opportunity to fallen man of acquiring holiness, and of obtaining salvation, are equally necessary to every child of Adam."[b] By others it has been supposed, that "the commandment is moral as to the duty, seeing there must be a time appointed for the service of God, and ceremonial only as to the specified day; so that it is of a mixed or middle nature;" the part which continues to be obligatory, these persons imagine,

[b] Dwight's Theology.

is the moral law; the Mosaic part alone, as they conceive, having been abrogated on the introduction of the gospel.

The first of these opinions appears to rest upon very fallacious grounds. That the sabbath was instituted, with a view of permanently promoting all the important purposes, which, by this class of writers, are confidently ascribed to its original design, is a pure gratuitous assumption, incapable of any legitimate scriptural proof. Admitting however, that it could be shown, that the institution was designed to promote, in every age of the world, these and similar important purposes, it would not necessarily follow that the commandment is, on this account, of a moral nature. However important and general may be the ends, which the observance of a sabbatical institution may be adapted to promote, the nature of the precept, as moral or positive, is not determined by circumstances of this kind. If the prescription to keep the seventh day more holy than any other day, had been founded on the nature of things, and been recognizable by the human conscience, without the promulgation of an express law, it would, unquestionably, have been a moral duty, and obligatory upon all men to the end of the world. Whatever general purposes however, were designed to be accomplished by the ordination of a weekly sabbath, if its observance became a duty, solely on account of it being commanded, so that otherwise

it would not have been known to be a part of the mind and will of God, the observance is plainly to be classed with those positive divine laws, which are obligatory on those persons alone to whom they are delivered.

The other notion, that the law of the sabbath is of a mixed, or middle nature, seems also to be clearly chargeable with inaccuracy. That the worship and service of the Divine Being is a moral duty of universal obligation, is not for a moment to be questioned: this duty being recognizable by the human conscience, as right in itself, is obligatory, independent of the enactments of Moses, and of every written code of laws whatever. It does not alter *the nature* of this, or of any other moral obligation however, that it requires *time* to perform it: it requires time to visit the widow and the fatherless, and to relieve the destitute; but no one thinks of saying that these duties are of a mixed or middle nature, because they cannot be performed without the consumption of a certain portion of time. It seems equally incorrect, to say that the law of the sabbath is of a mixed or middle nature. The worship of the Creator is, unquestionably, a moral duty: it was a duty obligatory on men prior to the promulgation of the fourth commandment, and it must continue to be obligatory so long as the relation between man and his Maker exists. This obligation, it is obvious, stands wholly apart

from that particular duty specified in the Mosaic precept, *the nature of which alone,* is the real point with which we are at present concerned. That duty is the assignment of a determinate time, to the exclusive service of God—the separation of the seventh day from a common to a sacred use; now these things, the determination of the seventh day to be a day of rest, and the sanctification of this rest to the peculiar service and worship of Jehovah, are undeniably appointments purely of a positive kind.

That the law of the sabbath is an ordinance, correctly speaking, of a positive nature, seems to be thus clear, beyond all cavil, or reasonable dispute. The question whether this commandment is moral or positive in its nature, is not at all affected, it is to be observed, by the obligation of the precept, but is wholly determined by the particular duty it prescribes. Every positive ordinance which the Creator promulgates, requires an instant and unqualified obedience, just as certainly as if it were moral in its nature. It is obvious, that to obey God in all things he commands, whether the command be moral or positive, is a duty indispensably obligatory on men as rational creatures. But, though obedience to all the revealed will of God, is thus a duty of indispensable obligation, it does not follow, that every law which God has prescribed must necessarily be of a moral nature. The morality of this obedience, it is plain, arises not from the nature of the commandment,

but from the obligation under which man, as a rational being, is placed, to comply with the will of his Creator. Every positive law, like that of the sabbath, requires an unhesitating obedience from all to whom it is delivered: to sanctify the seventh day was thus a duty, indispensably obligatory on all the Jewish people: it is wholly inconceivable, however, that a law of this nature can be binding on others, unless such an extension of its obligation be actually made known.

Another argument that has been adduced in support of the notion, that the fourth commandment is of a moral nature, may be considered as deserving of some notice, from the celebrity of the writer who has brought it forward. "The main objection against the perpetuity of this command," says President Edwards, "is, that the duty required is not moral." That this objection is an insufficient one, this writer attempts to prove on the following grounds. "That there should be certain fixed parts of time set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore there is as much reason, that there should be a command of perpetual and universal obligation about this, as about any other duty whatsoever." "The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is founded in the nature of things, only

our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. Without doubt, one proportion of time is in itself fitter than another; and a certain continuance of time better than any other; considering the universal state and nature of mankind, which God may see, though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So that the difference between this command and others, doth not lie in this, that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not: but, only that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation. So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands, only man's reason is not sufficient without divine direction so exactly to determine it."[c]

This reasoning is more specious, we apprehend, than relevant to the point at issue. It is, no doubt, true, that many of the divine laws of a positive nature, may have their foundation on important reasons, which the human mind can neither discern, nor comprehend. It is quite conceivable too, that things

[c] Sermons on the Perpetuity of the Sabbath. Works, Vol. VII. p. 507.

which appear to men indifferent in themselves, may, in their nature, differ materially as understood by infinite wisdom. The responsibility of man, however, does not extend beyond the measure of the powers and faculties with which he has been endowed: ordinances, therefore, which God may see to be founded in the nature of things, but which, from the natural and necessary limits of the human capacity, it is impossible the mind of man can discern to have this foundation, can never constitute matter of obligation, except they be expressly commanded and made known. The precise difference between this command and others, pointed out by this acute writer, is, therefore, a true and sufficient reason for its being termed a positive, in contradistinction to a moral precept. Moral duties may be seen of themselves; but this law could not be discovered without revelation. "Moral precepts," says Bishop Butler, to the same purpose, "are those, the reasons of which we see: positive precepts are those, the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself; positive duties from external commands." Now, because the mind of man is insufficient to discern any reason for the seventh day being sanctified more than the sixth, or the eighth, or the ninth, the law which prescribed the sanctification of a particular day, is correctly called a positive precept; and is with manifest propriety regarded as

obligatory on those alone to whom it has been delivered.

The law of conscience cannot possibly extend beyond precepts, which, to the moral judgment, appear right in themselves, and which on this account are recognized as of indispensable obligation independent of any enactment; and precepts which derive their obligation from an express announcement of the divine will. "If any one asks what is a moral precept," says a valuable contemporary writer, "the answer must be, that the conscience, if honestly consulted, will determine that point. So far from the moral precepts of the Mosaic law being, to the Christian, necessary to determine what is right and wrong, this moral judgment is necessary to determine which are the moral precepts of Moses."[d]

On this account, another argument, which has sometimes been confidently assigned as a sufficient reason for regarding the fourth commandment as a moral precept, namely, that the other nine are all undeniably of a moral nature, seems to be altogether futile and irrelevant. To say nothing of the fact, that in other scriptural passages, moral and positive precepts are enumerated and blended together without any distinction, Ezek. xviii. 5-9, Acts xv. 20; it is indubitable, that a proper and ready recognition of every duty of a moral nature, is an obligation implied in the very constitution of man, as a rational

[d] Whately on Paul's Writings.

and accountable agent, and constitutes a chief part of his responsibility to his Maker.

III.—There have been some writers who, from being accustomed to entertain, with an undoubting confidence, the opinion that the sabbath was instituted at the creation of the world, seem to have imagined they were warranted in drawing from *the supposition* that this was the case, the conclusion, "that the ordinance was designed for the human race without distinction, and continues to be obligatory on all men unto the end of the world."[e]

There has, hitherto, been much too great an importance attached in religious inquiries, to conjectural notions of this nature. It is in vain we search the scriptures, with the professed view of ascertaining the mind and will of God, if we allow unsatisfactory conjectures, which admit neither of proof nor disproof, to influence and determine the conclusions we deduce from scriptural evidence. We can never reasonably expect to see the progress of religious error and delusion effectually arrested, and the cause of scriptural truth generally to prevail, until people are taught to abandon the absurd habit of interpreting the scriptures through the medium of preconceived theories. Men have yet, in a great measure, practically to learn the important truth, *that an impartial induction from legitimate scriptural evidence, is at the foundation of*

[e] Dwight.

all correct thinking upon religious subjects. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that if it be ascertained that the scriptures contain a revelation of the divine will, it must be the dictate, alike of reason and of duty, to receive implicitly whatever they reveal. If the scriptures be recognized as an authoritative communication from God to man, the question is no longer, what do we think *is probable?* but, what is it that we find *actually revealed as true?* Instead, then, of forming positive opinions on points concerning which there has no distinct information been communicated, and allowing conjectural notions to influence our minds in the examination of legitimate evidence, it seems more consonant with reason, and at the same time more respectful to that authoritative character which the scriptures claim, carefully to distinguish between what is certain and what is merely possible, or presumptive; and from that portion of scriptural testimony, which we thus ascertain to be certain, to draw our conclusions, without giving heed to the vague notions and baseless theories of speculative divines.

The particular time at which the law of the sabbath was first promulgated, is obviously a question of fact, which, with every other point of a similar nature, can be determined only by competent testimony. It is, no doubt, quite conceivable, that some sabbatical ordinance may have been instituted at the Creation; but that this actually was the case, is a

mere conjecture, which admits neither of satisfactory proof, nor of decisive confutation. It is certain, that of any institution or observance of the ordinance, prior to the time of Moses, there exists no record in the sacred volume. In the second chapter of Genesis, the sabbath is indeed mentioned, and *the reason* assigned for God sanctifying *the seventh day*, namely, "because *that in it*, he had rested from all his work he created and made:" it is not there stated, however, that the observance of it commenced *at that time*. Moses, it is to be remembered, was not narrating the history of the work of Creation, for the information and obedience of Adam and the patriarchs, but for the instruction and use of the Israelites, who lived two thousand five hundred years afterwards. As *they* had received a command to keep a weekly day of rest, and, as *one of the reasons* for the ordination of this command, was to commemorate the completion of the work of Creation on *the seventh day*, it was natural for the sacred historian, when recording the work of Creation in six days, to mention that the seventh day was the day of God's resting from his works, the event which *they* had been taught to celebrate by the observance of a weekly day of rest. This interpretation of the passage seems most naturally to accord with the facts of the case: at all events, it is undeniable, that there is nothing recorded from which it can be inferred, that the law was actually promulgated to

Adam in his state of innocence; and it is not less certain, that of any observance of the institution, prior to its promulgation by Moses, there exists no trace in the subsequent history of the antediluvian and patriarchal ages.

It is deserving of notice, that while the conjecture that the sabbath was instituted at the Creation, is supported by no direct evidence contained in sacred history, all the subsequent evidence relative to the period of its first promulgation, points to a different conclusion. It is certain that the Jews and early Christians, who unquestionably possessed more favourable opportunities of judging of the traditional impressions that existed respecting its origin than we do now, were generally opposed to the notion of its primeval institution. As its observance was not included in the reputed "seven precepts given to Noah," which the Jews held to be obligatory on all men, they adduced this fact as a conclusive proof that it was designed for their nation exclusively. It was their custom, accordingly, to designate it *the bride of the synagogue;* in this way distinguishing it as an observance peculiar to themselves. The opinion that the sabbath was not known previous to the time of Moses, seems also to have generally obtained in the first ages of the christian church. The learned Heylin has argued, with much force, that as the early christian fathers, Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, all adduce the non-existence of a sabbath before

the days of Moses, as a proof that it was not designed to retain its obligation under the gospel, the fact that an argument of this kind was confidently addressed to Jews and Jewish believers, shows very clearly, that this view of the subject was generally admitted at that time. "If we contend that the law is of perpetual and universal obligation," says Justin, "we run the hazard of charging God with inconsistency, as if he had appointed different modes of justification at different times: since they who lived before Abraham were not circumcised, and *they who lived before Moses, neither observed the sabbath,* nor offered sacrifices, although God bore testimony to them that they were righteous."[f] This opinion is certainly in perfect accordance with the concurrent testimony of sacred history: for, of any observance of a sabbath during the patriarchal ages, no footsteps are now to be traced. Neither in the history of the antediluvian world, nor in the history of Noah, nor in that of Abraham, nor of Isaac, nor of Jacob, is the institution once referred to. On the supposition that the sabbath was observed by the patriarchs, this circumstance is certainly not a little remarkable: for among the numerous minute and familiar narratives we possess, of the religious customs and domestic habits of these times, it is very improbable that a single allusien to this weekly practice should never have once occurred, if it had

[f] Dr. Kaye's Justin Martyr, p. 23.

then been an established observance. As the sacred history advances, this improbability becomes stronger and stronger. If the Israelites had been in the practice of observing a weekly sabbath, previous to their migration to Egypt, the observance must necessarily have been, in a great measure, discontinued, at the period of their captivity: there is no mention made, however, of any difficulty they experienced under the rule of their oppressive bond-masters, in fulfilling this religious obligation; nor of the observance being suspended, or sinfully neglected: and it is certain, that those to whom the law was actually delivered, received no permission to dispense, at any time whatever, with the literal performance of its rigorous prescriptions.

The sixteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, contains *the first* account of the institution and observance of a sabbatical ordinance, recorded in sacred history. It has sometimes been alleged, by those who suppose that the ordinance was given to Adam at the Creation, that the words of the fourth commandment, "*Remember the sabbath day* to keep it holy," plainly imply that the sabbath was known and observed previously. That the sabbath was known and observed, previous to the delivery of this command at Mount Sinai, is indubitable: it was first delivered at Sin, in the wilderness; and in a short time afterwards it was repeated to the people, "as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation,"

in that code of laws which was given them to be the permanent standard of their civil and religious polity. If, then, the word *remember*, refers to any previous knowledge of the institution at all, it is natural to think that it refers to its promulgation and observance in the wilderness: at all events, there is not the shadow of a proof, that it has any reference to *a supposed command* given to Adam, and observed during the patriarchal ages. It is to be observed further, that while there is no intimation in this passage in Exodus, of the sabbath being the revival of a former ordinance, or the continuance of one already established, several of the circumstances that are related, furnish strong indications of the people being previously wholly unacquainted with any weekly sabbatical observance. The circumstances which were preliminary to the ordination of the law, are thus narrated: "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." This was spoken to Moses, on account of the murmuring of the people for the want of bread. It is further related, that when the manna was given, the people "gathered it every morning, every man according to

his eating: and when the sun waxed hot it melted." It is stated also, that notwithstanding they had been strictly enjoined not to leave any portion of what they gathered until the following morning, "some of them did leave of what they had gathered, and it bred worms and stank, and Moses was wroth with them." It had already been intimated to Moses, that a double portion was to be gathered on the sixth day, but it does not appear that the reason of this double gathering was, at that time, assigned to the people. Now it is natural to think, that if they had been accustomed to keep the seventh day as a sabbath, this circumstance of a double supply being furnished on the sixth day, would have excited little or no surprise: we find it recorded, however, that when, "on the sixth day the people gathered twice as much bread," "all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses;" evidently apprehensive of some mistake, and fearing, probably, that serious consequences might ensue if this were a second violation of the established regulation. To this application of the rulers, Moses made the following reply, now assigning as the reason for this double portion being gathered on the sixth day, *the ordination of a day of holy rest* on the next. "This is that which the Lord hath said, *To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord:* bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe: and that which remaineth over, lay up for

you to be kept until the morning." "And they laid it up until the morning, as Moses bade, and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day: *for to-day is a sabbath* unto the Lord, to-day ye shall not find it in the field: Six days ye shall gather it, but the seventh day which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none."

The whole tenor of this narrative seems, naturally, to accord with the supposition, that this was the first actual institution of a weekly day of rest. The words of Moses would intimate more distinctly than they even do at present, that it was the institution of a new observance, if the English version had been more literally rendered: for, in the original, it is the indefinite article which occurs in the 23rd and 26th verses. The reply of Moses to the application of the rulers, ought accordingly to have been rendered, "To-morrow *is a rest* of a holy sabbath unto the Lord." "Six days shall ye gather it, but on the seventh day which *is a sabbath*, in it there shall be none."

That the observance of a weekly day of rest was a new institution at that time, seems also to be plainly indicated by the conduct of the people, on receiving these instructions respecting the seventh day: at first, it appears, several of them refused to comply with the prescribed regulation. "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the

seventh day for to gather, and they found none." This conduct called forth the following divine expostulation, in which there seems to be clearly implied the fact, that the sabbath was one of the commandments "*given*" to the people "to prove them whether they would walk in God's law or no:" "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye *to keep my commandments and my laws?* See, for that *the Lord hath given you the sabbath,* therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. *So the people rested on the seventh day.*"[g]

That the sabbath *was given* to the Israelites at this time, seems also to be plainly indicated in passages which occur in books of a later date. "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness, and I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do he shall even live in them. Moreover also *I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them,* that they might know I am the Lord that sanctify them."[h] "And *madest known unto them thy holy sabbath,* and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant."[i] These passages seem to be strongly at variance with the supposition that the sabbath was known and observed as a divine ordinance

[g] Exod. xv. 30. [h] Ezek. xx. 10-12. [i] Neh. ix. 14.

during the patriarchal ages: for if this had been the case, it is difficult to see in what sense it could *have been given* and *made known* in the wilderness at the time of Moses.

That the sabbath was limited to the Jewish people, and was not designed for the observance of mankind at large, is clearly shown also by the nature of several of the reasons assigned for its institution. It is declared to have been an essential part of their national covenant, and a sign distinguishing them from every other nation. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for *a perpetual covenant;* it is *a sign* between me and the children of Israel for ever."[k] That the institution was designed for the Israelites alone, is shown also by the reasons by which its observance was enforced. In the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, the Sinaitic covenant is repeated, and the miraculous deliverance of the people from Egyptian captivity, assigned as the sole cause of the sabbath being instituted. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."[l] There are other passages, indeed, in which the sabbath is stated to have been instituted in commemoration of

[k] Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. See also Ezek. xx. 12. [l] Deut. v. 15.

God's rest from the work of creation; but it is to be observed, that even in these cases, the ordinance is spoken of as "a sign" of the covenant into which the nation had entered. The sabbath "is *a sign* between me and the children of Israel for ever: *for* in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and refreshed."[m]

It is thus very manifest, that the notion of the sabbath having been instituted at the Creation, from which the conclusion has so hastily been drawn, that "it is binding on all men in every age of the world," has prevailed without any sufficient proof. It is certain that there exists no express precept or undoubted example, from the existence of which alone, we could warrantably infer, that it was observed anterior to the time of Moses: on the other hand, it is the express testimony of the inspired writers, that it "was given to the Israelites" by Moses,—that it "was made known" to that people in the wilderness,—and that it was afterwards promulgated to them as "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation," at Mount Sinai. That the ordinance was designed for this kingdom of priests alone, seems also to be clearly indicated by several of the purposes it was instituted to serve: it was to be "a perpetual covenant between them and Jehovah," and "a sign between him and them for ever," thus distinguishing them from every other people. As

[m] Exod. xxxi. 17.

the sabbath thus formed an essential part of the Sinaitic covenant, and as its observance was enforced by sanctions peculiar to the Israelitish theocratic government, it is natural to conclude that it was designed for the Jewish people exclusively, and was destined to terminate with that system of civil and religious polity with which it was, in divine wisdom, incorporated.

IV.—By some writers, it has been maintained, that though the observance of a sabbath is not expressly mentioned previous to its promulgation to the Israelites in the wilderness, there are indications of a septenary division of time in the Mosaic history of the patriarchal ages, which can receive no satisfactory solution, except on the supposition of the sabbath having been familiarly known at that early period. It is usual with this class of writers also to advance, that there are indications of a general knowledge of the weekly sabbath to be found in the sacredness attached by the Gentiles to the number *seven;* and it has been inferred, that this traditional knowledge, of which (it is assumed) several of the heathen nations were in possession, must have been transmitted to them from the earliest ages of the world.

On these, and on some other collateral questions, of a nature similarly obscure and conjectural, there has long existed, among learned writers, a considerable diversity of opinion. When, indeed, the nature

of the evidence relative to them is considered, it is unreasonable to expect that the most dispassionate inquirers will ever, on such points, be found entirely to agree. On the particular consideration of such conjectural questions, we do not feel called upon at the present to enter; for whether or not there be any sufficient reason for entertaining the opinion, that some sabbatical institution was observed previous to the time of Moses, (and, as has already been remarked, it is certainly quite possible that some law of the kind may have been then in force, although no instance of its observance has been recorded,) it is manifest that the question of the existing obligation of the weekly sabbath, as well as the grounds and extent of religious obligation in general, are wholly independent of all points of this doubtful nature. It is the *certain testimony* of the apostles of Christ, it is ever to be remembered, which constitutes the authoritative rule of christian duty, and not *the dubious theories* which learned writers have applied to the interpretation of the scanty records of ancient sacred and profane history.

Nearly all the passages which, at one time, it was customary for the advocates of the perpetuity of the sabbath to adduce, in support of the conjecture, that the Pagan nations were in possession of a traditional knowledge of a weekly day of rest, are now generally allowed to be either wholly irrelevant, or so

very ambiguous in their meaning, as to admit of no satisfactory inference being deduced from them. The few passages which are acknowledged as genuine,[n] serve chiefly to prove, that the custom of attaching a peculiar sacredness to the number seven, obtained very generally among several of the Pagan nations,—a custom, the existence of which no one has ever sought to call in question. The peculiar importance that was attached to this number, by so many ancient writers, both sacred and profane, is doubtless a very singular coincidence; and affords a considerable degree of countenance to the conjecture, that the practice may have originated in one and the same source. Even this, however, can never be correctly considered as being more than a plausible conjecture, for it admits of no satisfactory proof.

In the sacred writings, it is well known, the number seven is very frequently used to denote *perfection*. It is possible that this use of the word may have been derived from a knowledge, transmitted from

[n] Several of the lines, which it was customary for all the old puritan divines to give as the authorities of Hesiod and Homer upon this point, are now understood to have been the coinage of some ancient writer, (supposed to have been Aristobulus, or Clement of Alexandria,) who had thought proper to invent them to serve this or some similar purpose. Those who have lately been at the pains of examining the works of these poets, purposely in quest of such citations, have heen unable to discover any trace of them. The puritan divines had evidently all copied them one from another; and, in doing this, they have been followed by numerous respectable writers, since their time.—*See, on this subject, A Letter to G. Higgins, Esq., by T. S. Hughes*, B.A., *of Cambridge.*

one generation to another, that the work of creation was completed and made *perfect* on the seventh day: or, perhaps, in some traditional knowledge which the patriarchs possessed, of God resting from his works on that day. It is not impossible also, but that a corruption of this tradition may have been the original source of the ancient superstition prevalent in pagan countries, respecting the number seven: this supposition, however, possesses, we apprehend, a very faint shadow of probability. Some learned writers have maintained, with a much better show of reason, that the origin of this custom is to be traced to the practice of keeping the seventh month sacred in honour of the birth of Apollo: and others with a greater appearance of probability still, have contended that the true origin of the custom, is to be found in the number of the planets then known to exist, from which source, it is well known, the heathens derived the names they gave to the days of the week. "Dion Cassius, in Pompeius, c. 6, says, that the Romans derived the practice of assigning the names of the planets to different days, from the Egyptians, and that it had become, in a certain degree, national among them. Whether the Egyptians, having received the computation of time by weeks from the Jews, applied the names of the seven heavenly bodies then known to be immediately connected with our system to the days of the week, or whether their

observation of the heavenly bodies first led them to compute time by periods of seven days, may be doubtful; but it appears certain that the computation was made subservient to the purposes of astrology."[o] The whole of this curious subject seems to be irretrievably involved in doubt and obscurity. Whether Homer possessed any knowledge of a septenary division of time at all, is now admitted to be by no means certain: it is abundantly clear, indeed, that as early as his time, a peculiar sacredness was attached to the number seven; whatever may have been the source in which the superstition originated. As it respects our present purpose however, it is of more importance to notice, that though there is sufficient evidence of the prevalence of this custom among the Greeks and other nations, there exists no proof whatever of any of these nations having ever kept a weekly sabbath. On the contrary, it is certain that the Gentiles were, for a long period, entirely ignorant of the existence of such an observance; and it is matter of history, that when they first heard of it, they derided it as a Jewish superstition.

It is to be remembered, moreover, that it is the explicit testimony of the sacred historian, that the sabbath was given to the Israelites as a nation separated to God's peculiar and exclusive service;—that it was to be "a perpetual covenant and sign

[o] Dr. Kaye's Justin Martyr, p. 95.

between God and the children of Israel for ever."[p] "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me *throughout your generations: that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.*"[q] When the unequivocal import of this and similar statements, assigned by Jehovah himself as the reason for the ordination of the sabbath, is considered, it appears very strange that, in the face of such an authority, so many of the professed advocates of the claims of revealed religion, should have shown so great an anxiety to discover evidences of the existence of a sabbath among Pagan nations. It is incontrovertible that the scriptures state that the sabbath was given to the Jewish people as a sign of their national covenant, serving, with other ordinances, to distinguish them from all the nations by which they were surrounded: if then, these writers had discovered the evidence, in support of the notion that the institution was designed for mankind in general and was observed in every age of the world, of which they were in quest, it is not easy to see in what sense the institution could, in that case, have been correctly said to be "a sign between God and the children of Israel for ever," or how it could have served the end at all, of perpetuating among the Israelites a knowledge of the important fact, that Jehovah had sanctified or separated them from every other people.

[p] Exod. xxxi. 16. [q] Exod. xxxi. 13.

There seems to be equally little reason for attaching the importance that some have done, to the early adoption of the custom of computing time by the number seven. If, indeed, the computation of time by periods of seven days, had been the only or principal use of the number which obtained during the patriarchal ages, there might be some colour of reason for attaching a degree of importance to the practice: this, however, was by no means the case. The word week was used among the Hebrews, not merely as denoting a period of seven days; it signified also, a period of seven years, computing from one sabbatical year to another, and also a period of seven times seven years, reckoned from one sabbatical jubilee to another. This extensive use of the word seems to have obtained, in some degree, among the Israelites, not only subsequent to the erection of their theocratic government, but even during the patriarchal ages, prior to the ordination of any sabbatical year or jubilee. We read in the Book of Genesis, for instance, that Laban, in reply to Jacob's expostulation, (on the occasion of his not receiving Rachel to wife, having served for her, as was stipulated, seven years,) used the following language. "It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first born. Fulfil *her week*, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me, yet *seven other years*." "And Jacob did so, and

fulfilled *her week*, and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also." It is by no one pretended that the seventh year sabbath was instituted anterior to the time of Moses: if, however, the practice of computing time by periods of seven days, (and it ought to be borne in mind, that the prevalence of this practice at that time at all, is by no means certain,) is to be regarded as an evidence of the early institution of a weekly sabbath, and of its having been originally designed for mankind in general; the practice of computing time by weeks of years, may with equal cogency be adduced in proof of the ordination of *a sabbatical year*, previous to the erection of the Jewish theocracy.

That at the introduction of the gospel, all the christian converts should have adopted the practice of computing time by periods of seven days, was what was naturally to have been expected. Jesus and his first disciples being all Jews, were already accustomed to use this hebdomadal division of time, and the Gentile converts would naturally be led to adopt the same convenient custom. The language in which some of the leading facts of the gospel are narrated, such as that Christ rose from the dead "on the first day of the week," would of itself indeed teach the primitive believers to adopt the practice; and it is not improbable, that the occurrence of the above and other similar expressions, led also to the general adoption of the custom of holding their

stated convocations for worship on the first day of the week, a practice which, it is evident, obtained at a very early period of the christian church.

V.—It has been customary with some writers to assume, that the duty required in the fourth commandment is, simply, the sanctification of *a seventh portion of time, or of one day in seven:* and that the precept is obeyed by sanctifying the first day of the week, just as well as by sanctifying the seventh day, or any other. By this representation of the requirements of the law, these persons have attempted to escape from that charge of inconsistency, which so palpably attaches to those who deduce from a commandment which states, that "the seventh day is the sabbath," the conclusion that men are now under an obligation to sanctify another day, of which the precept makes no mention.

This method of interpreting a positive law of heaven, if less glaringly inconsistent than the illogical practice it attempts to avoid, seems in itself to be not less unjustifiable. We never read in any part of the Old or New Testament scriptures, of any law requiring men to keep holy a seventh portion of time, or one day in seven: the sanctification of *the sabbath,* and of *the seventh day,* are the only duties mentioned; and these two are uniformly represented to be the same thing,—the expressions being familiarly used as convertible terms. It will not be questioned, that the weekly sabbath

observed by the Jewish people, was that prescribed in the fourth commandment: there were not two or more weekly sabbaths prescribed to them; there was only one—and that one was expressly stated to be *the seventh day.* As then, the sanctification of *this day* was the duty particularized in the commandment, it is manifestly a gross and most presumptuous misrepresentation of the precept, to say that it requires merely the sanctification of one day in seven, a prescription, mentioned neither in the decalogue nor in any other portion of the Sacred volume.

No doubt, if God had enjoined the sanctification of *a seventh portion of time,* without specifying any particular day, men would have been at liberty to observe any day they pleased. To recognize, however, the obligation of the fourth commandment, and arbitrarily to alter its prescriptions at our own pleasure; to affirm that it is immaterial what day be observed, provided we do observe a sabbath, when a particular day has been distinctly specified; to deal in this manner with the express commandments of Jehovah, must surely be alike presumptuous and unwarrantable. All conduct of this kind stands exposed to the threatenings annexed to every interference with the positive laws of heaven. If this sabbatical law extends to christians, it behoves them to give it an unhesitating and exact obedience. It is not for a moment to be questioned that He who delivered the law, possesses alone a right to alter its

prescriptions. We may indeed imagine that one day is as good as another, and that the observance of the first day of the week must serve precisely the same ends as the observance of the seventh. Thus thought Naaman the Syrian, that one river must be as good as another. This may be all quite true, so long as God makes no difference between one day, or one river, and another:—when that difference, however, is once made, and intimated for man's obedience, by the promulgation of a positive law, it behoves christians to beware of contemning God, by gainsaying what he has said. In matters of this kind, men have nothing to do, but to hearken with implicit deference to the voice of their Maker,—to listen, and to obey.

VI.—Some advocates of the modern sabbath have attempted to introduce a modification of the prescribed mode of observing the original law, and have contended that it was only with this proposed modification of its duties, the precept is now binding. They conceive that an allowance ought to be made for the difference between the rigour of the Jewish and the liberality of the Christian dispensation; and that a correspondent alteration ought to be made in the interpretation of the sabbatical observance. The Jewish people, they think, were unnecessarily scrupulous in their manner of keeping the day, and committed the gross mistake of making the literal observance of its prescriptions *the end itself* of the

institution, instead of viewing it in the correct light (correct, that is, according to the light in which these modern sabbatarians view it,) of being merely "*an important means* of religious improvement." While, therefore, they disapprove entirely of transferring the rigour and austerity of the Jewish observance to the mild dispensation of the gospel, they contend that though a literal adherence to its prescriptions is no longer called for, the object which the observance is adapted to promote, is so highly important, that the recognition and prudent observance of the law is still an important religious duty. This seems to be the chief ground on which Bishop Horsley wished to rest his defence of the modern doctrine. "The spirit of the Jewish law," says this writer, "was rigour and severity. Rigour and severity were adapted to the rude manners of the first ages of mankind, and were particularly suited to the refractory temper of the Jewish people. The rigour of the law itself was far outdone by the rigour of the popular superstition and the pharisaical hypocrisy—if, indeed, superstition and hypocrisy, rather than a particular ill will against our Lord, were the motives with the people and their rulers, to tax him with a breach of the sabbath, when they saw his power exerted on the sabbath day for the relief of the afflicted. The christian law is the law of liberty. We are not, therefore, to take the measure of our obedience from the letter

of the Jewish law,—much less from Jewish prejudices, and the suggestions of Jewish malignity. In the sanctification of the sabbath in particular, we have our Lord's express authority to take a pious discretion for our guide; keeping constantly in view the end of the institution, and its necessary subordination to higher duties."[r]

This view of the subject is no doubt very specious; and wearing as it does to most minds, the appearance of steering a middle course—a course dictated by prudent moderation, and removed at an equal distance from the error of those who insist on the sabbath being still kept with Pharisaical austerity, and the apparently not less dangerous notion of esteeming every day alike holy, it naturally recommends itself at once, to all men of timid minds, who are satisfied with a hasty and superficial view of the question.[s] Plausible, however, as this notion at first sight appears, it is liable to the serious objection of being destitute of all legitimate scriptural evidence:—it seems to be founded indeed on a radically defective and erroneous conception of the original

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[r] Sermon on Mark ii. 27.

[s] On this and on every other question of apparent difficulty, upon which there exists a diversity of opinion, men of weak and undecided minds, readily fall in with any notion that appears in their view to modify the subject. This modification of the question is looked upon as the safest course; and usually saves them the exertion of personally instituting such an accurate inquiry into its real bearing, as would qualify them to come to a decisive and satisfactory conclusion upon it.

design of the sabbatical institution, as well as of the peculiar nature of that economy with which it was interwoven :—and it assumes, moreover, a discretionary power to adapt the duties of the positive laws of Jehovah to our own notions of propriety, which is alike unauthorized and presumptuous.

Whatever "pious discretion" men may now assume in their manner of keeping the sabbath, it is certain, that the law itself gives no person, whether Jew or Christian, a discretionary power to dispense with any one of its prescriptions. That the Jewish people did not consider themselves at liberty to modify, in any degree, these prescriptions, is unequivocally shown by their uniform careful observance of them :[t] and it is not less certain, that in strictly adhering to the letter of the law, they were simply acting conformably with their revealed rule of duty. The notion that they usually overlaid the observance with unnecessary restrictions, and magnified the importance of an outward compliance with its duties, at the expense of that diffusion of religious knowledge the institution was calculated to promote, is unsupported, we apprehend, by any legitimate proof.

[t] At the conquest of Jerusalem, by Pompey, (B. C. 63,) the siege would have been protracted to a much greater length, had the Jews been willing to make the least effort in their own defence on the sabbath; but as they scrupulously abstained from all labour on that day, the Romans, every sabbath, filled up the ditch, and set their engines against the walls without opposition: this enabled them, on other days of the week, to make their attacks with more effect, and contributed greatly to their ultimate success.

That this or any other of the institutions of the old covenant, indeed, was designed principally to spread religious and general knowledge among the people, appears to be an assumption founded on an entire misconception of the nature and primary design of the Mosaic economy. It is not to be forgotten, that there was a veil placed purposely upon the face of Moses, hindering the people from seeing to the end of that, which was afterwards to be abolished;—a veil which was never once removed until the advent of the Messiah. The old covenant, moreover, was designed to beget a spirit of fear and bondage, and to retain its subjects in a state of pupilage, until their arrival at that promise of spiritual redemption they inherited. The rigorous prescriptions of the sabbath, in conjunction with the other laws which *they were compelled to obey,* were, for wise purposes, imposed on them, until the time of gospel reformation; when, to those whose hearts were opened to understand the good news of salvation, this burden was displaced by the service of Him, whose "yoke is easy and whose burden is light." Feeling, however, as the Jewish people sensibly did, the service of Moses to be "a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear," they never presumed to introduce any modified interpretation of the positive precepts of Jehovah. As respected the manner in which they kept the sabbath day in particular, it is certain that

they, at least, were not left to their own "pious discretion," for the literal observance of the prescriptions of the law, which related, it is to be remembered, not only to an abstinence from all bodily and secular labour, but to the regular domestic economy of every family, was enforced by the most solemn of all earthly sanctions. The law was, "Whosoever doth any work on the sabbath, (and the kindling of a fire was specified as doing work,) shall surely be put to death." Thus were they commanded literally "to rest upon the sabbath day."

It is not to be questioned, then, that in scrupulously adhering to all the prescriptions of the sabbath, the Jewish people were merely acting in conformity with the injunctions delivered to them. That they generally overlaid it with needless restrictions, or superstitiously made the observance itself *an end,* in this way misconceiving its design as an important *means* of diffusing knowledge, seem to be pure figments of modern invention, deriving no countenance either from the facts of sacred history, or from the scriptural account of the original design of the sabbatical institution.

It has been supposed, indeed, that the conduct of Jesus, on various occasions, with respect to the sabbath, in taking liberties with it, which at that time were deemed unjustifiable, was meant to be a reproof of the over-scrupulous sanctity of the Phari-

sees, in their manner of observing the day; and in support of the supposition, this text has confidently been cited, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath,"—words which have been interpreted as "an emphatic axiom, expressive of the universal design and utility of the institution." The conduct of Jesus referred to, has also been frequently represented as being a practical correction of the unnecessary strictness with which the sabbath was then observed, with a view of permanently adapting the observance to the mild spirit of that new dispensation he was about to introduce. This interpretation of Christ's conduct, is usually assumed to be so obviously correct, as to admit of no dispute: specious, however, as it no doubt may be made to appear, it has been adopted, we apprehend, on very insufficient grounds.

It is perfectly true, that, in various instances, the scribes and Pharisees added traditions of their own to the prescriptions of Moses, numerous and burdensome as these prescriptions of themselves were: while Jesus, however, frequently rebuked these men for their selfish, hypocritical pretences, and their sanctimonious, self-righteous notions, it does not appear he ever found fault with the Jewish people for strictly complying with the rigorous terms of the sabbatical law, or with those of any other of the laws of Moses. On the contrary, it is certain, that he uniformly recognized the authority and literal obli-

gation of all the Mosaic precepts ;[u] and, by personally fulfilling all righteousness, paid them the highest conceivable honour and respect.

It is deserving of peculiar notice, that in most of the instances in which Jesus has been supposed to reprove the Pharisees for overloading the sabbath with needless restrictions, his principal and real purpose appears to have been to assert, by *an intentional* violation of the law, his divine authority, and *his own right as the Messiah,* to dispense with all the positive enactments of Moses. It was evidently with this view, for instance, that he asserted his lordship or power over the sabbath, " The Son of man" (the usual title he applied to himself) "is Lord also of the sabbath." It seems to have been the leading purpose of the conduct and conversation of Jesus, during his ministry, not so much to communicate *christian* instruction to the Jewish people, or even to his own disciples, (who indeed, as he himself informed them, were not then competent to receive it,) as to furnish satisfactory evidence of the validity of his claim to the Messiahship, while, at the same time, he was finishing the work given him to do. As the salvation of men had uniformly been represented in the Old Testament scriptures, as depending on the future revelation that was to be made, re-

[u] " Jesus said to the multitude and to his disciples, The scribes and the Pharisees *sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever* they bid you observe, that observe and do."—Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

specting the person and work of the Messiah, the chief questions which Jesus seems to have aimed at calling men's attention to, were such as these, "What think ye of Christ?" "Whose son is he?" By what works was he to prove his character and mission?

In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John, for instance, we find it narrated, that Jesus wrought a supernatural cure on a lame man who lay at the pool of Bethesda; and that on this cure being effected, he commanded the man to take up his bed and walk. This took place on the sabbath day. The Jews finding the man carrying his bed, charged him with breaking the sabbath, and doubtless on good grounds, for this act was a manifest violation of the law of Moses. The man, on being challenged for his conduct, naturally stated what had taken place, and afterwards gave his accusers Jesus as his authority, for what he had done: the charge of breaking the sabbath was accordingly transferred to Jesus himself.[x] What then was Christ's conduct, on being charged with violating the sabbath? Did he attempt to disprove the charge, by showing that the Jews had misinterpreted and overstated the law upon the subject? No; he appealed at once, it is deserving of notice, to the divine authority he

[x] The act was evidently regarded as a capital crime; for it is related, "*therefore* they sought to slay him, *because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*"—John v. 16.

possessed, as furnishing his warrant for breaking the sabbath, and superseding every positive precept of Moses. Jesus answered them, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."[y]

It was on the same grounds, namely, his own especial authority, that he rested his defence, when his disciples were charged with rubbing out the grains of corn on the sabbath. He seems to admit the act itself was unlawful; but, after making an allusion to the case of David and his companions, in eating the shew bread in the temple, (in referring to which, it appears to have been his object to show that the authority he possessed was at least equal to that of high priest, who dispensed with the divine law on that oc-

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[y] This answer was evidently understood by the Jews as implying the possession of divine power, and as calling God his Father in such a peculiar sense, as to claim an equality with God: for it is related, it exasperated them to that extent, "that they sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." This obviously was the leading question to which Jesus wished to direct their attention; and it afforded him an opportunity of proving, which he immediately afterwards did, the validity of his claim to the Messiahship.—See John v. 17-47.

In this and similar passages, we may be allowed to remark, there seems to be contained the simplest and best key to a satisfactory solution of the controverted question respecting the person of Christ. At that period, it is obvious, there was no difference of opinion about the meaning of the expression, "the Son of God:" that this designation implied a real and proper divinity of nature, was on all sides agreed. The question between Jesus and his opponents was, at no time, whether this appellation signified a divine person; the real question at issue was, whether his claim to be the Son of God was a valid one. This, then, is the proper ground on which the question ought to be placed. It is *a plain matter of fact*, which every plain-minded reader of the gospel history can judge of as correctly and as satisfactorily as can the most erudite critic. The question

casion,) he declares that "the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath, inasmuch as the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath." It is in this connexion that the latter expression ought to be interpreted: it does not stand alone, but is brought forward as a proposition, from which the conclusion is drawn, that Jesus possessed an entire dominion over this and every other positive appointment of the Mosaic economy. It seems then to be wholly incorrect, to interpret this expression as designed to affirm "the universal design and utility of the sabbatical institution." The meaning of the words, when viewed in their connexion, is plainly this, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the

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is not, what meaning do learned theologians *now attach* to the name given to Jesus, "the Son of God?" but, what was *the universal sense* in which this designation was understood, *when Jesus was on earth?* That in calling himself the Son of God, Jesus was understood by his enemies to mean he was a divine person, is indubitable; for it was on this very account they charged him with blasphemy; "he said God was his Father, making himself equal with God." That, by the expression, he actually wished to convey this meaning, is not less certain; for when this charge of blasphemy was made against him, he did not, it is to be observed, attempt to refute it, by showing they had misinterpreted what he intended to state: on the contrary, he tacitly admitted this was the true sense of his words, and proceeded to ground his defence on that divine evidence by which he substantiated his claims as the Messiah. The solemn controversy between Jesus and his opponents, on this point, was never settled during his life; and terminated in the apparent victory of the latter, in their cruel crucifixion of the Son of God. Then it was, that their mistaken judgment and unjust sentence were refuted and reversed; and that (by the Father interposing and raising Jesus from the dead, thus "declaring him to be the Son of God with power,") the controversy was finally, and beyond all rational doubt, determined.

sabbath, *therefore* the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." All the positive appointments of the Mosaic covenant, that had been instituted in adaptation to that stage of the progress of the scheme of redemption, could be abrogated by the same authority which originally enacted them. The sabbath was one of these ordinances; and the Son of man claimed a dominion over it, in virtue of the divine authority he possessed,—a power to dispense with its obligation, and to supersede it by the institutions of his own kingdom.[1]

While Jesus, however, in this manner publicly and avowedly violated the sabbath, and gave as his reason for doing so, *that the sabbath was made not for himself but for man,* he never once, during his public ministry, gave any general permission to dispense with the prescriptions of this or any other law of Moses; much less did he teach men to use a "pious discretion," in modifying the positive laws of heaven to suit their own notions of propriety. It is manifest, therefore, that to adduce his conduct in asserting his personal dominion over every positive precept of the Mosaic covenant, as an authoritative precedent for men now assuming a discretionary liberty with the positive laws of Jehovah, is altogether erroneous and unjustifiable. In matters of this

[1] In confirmation of this view of the words, see the parallel passages. Matt. xii. 1-8. Luke vi. 1-5.

kind, it is inconceivable that any compromise, or modification of duty whatever, can be warrantable. To assume, indeed, a liberty to modify any positive divine precept, is to introduce *a principle* fraught with the most serious evils and dangers: for the same principle which would warrant us in altering, in any degree, the prescribed mode of observing the sabbath, or any similar institution, would necessarily open a door for the admission of the countless traditions and inventions of "the mystery of iniquity." It is no doubt true, that we offend God as certainly, by *neglecting* to obey the positive laws he has promulgated, as by adding our own inventions and will-worship to the revealed will of heaven: there is plainly a possibility of erring in either way. When, however, after the obligation of a positive law like that of the sabbath is recognized, we presume to modify its duties in accommodation to our own notions of "pious discretion," the sin and danger of our conduct is inevitable. It is impossible that conduct of this kind can either be acceptable to God, or safe for man. An unhesitating compliance with the revealed will of God, (as one of the best of the Puritan divines[a] has somewhere said,) walking humbly and steadfastly according to this rule, a supreme regard to the authority of Christ as the only Lord of the

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[a] Dr. John Owen.

conscience; it is acting thus, that can alone prove permanently satisfactory to our own minds, justify us in the eyes of all sober-thinking christian men, and produce an obedience acceptable to Him whom alone christians are bound to serve.

VII.—By a few writers it has been supposed, that the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, is intimated in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "There remaineth therefore a rest (a sabbatism) to the people of God." In support of this opinion it has been advanced, that as in this passage, the apostle, instead of the word *Katapausis,* which he had previously been using, to express *that rest* of which he is treating, uses the Hebrew term *Sabbatismos,* which admits of the signification, "the keeping of a sabbath," it is warrantable to infer, that this change of *the term* was made in order to include the first day of the week, and to denote it as the new day of sabbatical rest under the gospel. By that sabbatical rest which the apostle says, "remaineth to the people of God," these writers understand, accordingly, this supposed first day sabbath,—a rest, which christians enter into, and enjoy in this world. According to this view of the passage, the leading design of the apostle is to exhibit the excellency of the gospel, its freedom from a spirit of bondage, and that peace with God and spiritual rest which flow from the belief of the truth, in con-

trast with the burdensome yoke, and servile state, of the former dispensation.[b]

Any one who is at the pains of examining the scope of the context, will readily perceive that this interpretation greatly perplexes the whole passage, by rendering the meaning of the writer, which of itself seems very plain, extremely involved and obscure: besides this, it is open to the serious objection of materially injuring the apostle's argument, making it obviously incorrect and inconclusive. *The rest* of

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[b] We are not aware that this view of the passage has been adopted by any modern commentator of any note.—*See Doddridge, Macknight, Scott, Stuart, &c. &c. in loc.* It was very prevalent however, during the seventeenth century, and was maintained with great zeal and erudition by Dr. John Owen, and several other learned divines of the same school. It was adopted also by Glas, and by some others of the most eminent of the early English and Scotch Independents. —*See Owen on Hebrews, in loc.—Glas's Works, vol.* 111, *p.* 356.

While these learned congregationalists, however, held this opinion, and acted on it themselves, they knew their own principles too well, to allow them to think of inferring from this sabbatism, (which they contended pertained to the believers of the gospel exclusively,) the conclusion that civil governments are bound to enforce the observance of what is called a christian sabbath, on a promiscuous population. "It was a great profanation of the sabbatism of the people of God," says the last mentioned writer, "to oblige the nations to keep the first day of the week as christians, who could not therein show regard and subjection to the authority and power of the Lord Jesus, but unto that authority and power that constrained them to keep it, which also appointed and obliged them to keep many other holy days without any warrant from the New Testament. Christ gave commission to make disciples by the gospel, and to teach them to observe all things, whatsoever he commanded the apostles: but he gave no commission to procure an observance of the things which he commanded, by virtue of any other authority or power, but that of his word: and all force or compulsion is inconsistent with the nature of the obedience he requires, and with the profession of subjection to him in doing the things that he says."—

On the Three Divine Rests.

which the apostle is speaking, is plainly not that of the first, or any other day of the week, but one, a promise of which was left to the believing Hebrews *at that time;* it was a rest into which they were exhorted diligently to strive to seek to enter, and cautioned lest any of them should fall short of it. As none of them had *then* arrived at this rest, though they had already believed the gospel, it seems very manifest that the apostle was treating, not of any rest in this life, but of a perfect and eternal rest in heaven. With this supposition accordingly, the whole tenor of his argument accords; for after showing that neither the rest of the seventh day, nor that in the land of Canaan, was the ultimate rest intended, but only types of it, he concludes that there was still a rest in store—a sabbatism remaining for the people of God. "The apostle, in his conclusion, hath substituted the word *sabbatismos* for the word *katapausis, rest,* used in his premises. But both are proper, especially the word sabbatism, in this place, because by directing us to what is said in verse 4, it showeth the nature of that rest which remaineth to the people of God. It will resemble the rest of the sabbath, both in its employments and enjoyments: for therein the saints shall rest from their work of trial, and from all the evils they are subject to in the present life; and shall recollect the labours they have undergone, the dangers they have escaped, and the temptations they have overcome:

and by reflecting on these things, and the method of their salvation, they shall be unspeakably happy."[c]

The word *sabbatismos*, which occurs in the 10th verse, is merely a Hebrew word with a Greek ending: that this term and the word *katapausis*, though both employed, are used as equivalent in signification, seems to be indubitable: for if it were otherwise,—if the former had been used with the intention of expressing more than the latter, the apostle's reasoning would be entirely invalidated, there being in that case more in his conclusion than in the premises from which his inference is deduced.

It is no doubt true, that the believers of the gospel enjoy, even in this world, a spiritual rest through faith in Christ: but the enjoyment of this rest must ever be accompanied with fighting the good fight of faith, and running with patience the race set before them. It is also certain that this present rest in Christ is intimately connected with the hope and prospect of that future perfect rest of which the apostle treats: for every christian is begotten again to the lively hope of it, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; to the hope, namely, of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away. Of this rest, reserved in heaven for every true follower of Christ, the apostle, as has already been remarked, treats at large in the passage under consideration; and concludes by proving, that it still "remains in store a

[c] Macknight's Note in loc.

sabbatism for the people of God." Acquiescing, with ardent gratitude, in this conclusion, every christian may, in the words of the same apostle upon a different occasion, with much reason exclaim, " Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift:"—for that present, perpetual, spiritual sabbatism, which is now enjoyed by the belief of the gospel of salvation; and above all, for the promise and prospect of a perfect and interminable sabbatism beyond death and the grave. " Having, therefore, the promise" of this future sabbatism, and being already put in possession of that spiritual rest which is the sure pledge and foretaste of the ultimate realization of an eternal rest in heaven, surely with christian men, even in this present life, every day ought to be as a sabbath day.

NOTE.

That the whole life of a christian ought to be regarded and passed as a holy sabbath, and not any particular part of it more than another, seems to have been the prevailing doctrine during the first four centuries. Of any other christian sabbath than this, the writers of that time appear to have been wholly ignorant. This, Heylin has shown at large, by numerous citations from Chrysostom, Augustin, and from various others of the Christian Fathers. See Hieronymus in Decalog; Justin Martyr Dial. cum Tryph; Chrysost. Hom. 39 in Matt. xii; Clemens Alexandr, Strom. lib. iv; and Augustin Op. passim. "Of all the ten commandments," says the last mentioned writer, "that of the sabbath alone, is given to be kept as a figure; which figure we are to embrace with our understanding, *not also to set forth by bodily rest.* For, whereas, by the sabbath is signified the spiritual rest to which all mankind are called by our Lord himself, saying, Come unto me, and I will give you rest; yet the other commandments we keep, without any figurative signification, in their primary and proper sense as they were delivered."

On this, however, as well as on various other points, it is frequently a matter of considerable difficulty, to reconcile the Fathers, as they are called, with each other: sometimes, indeed, it is not a little difficult to reconcile them with themselves. The principal cause of the inconsistencies that appear in their writings respecting the sabbath, seems to have been the importance then attached to the decalogue; and the difficulty found in reconciling the notion of its perpetuity with their non-observance of the fourth commandment. Irenæus, who appears to have maintained that the decalogue is of perpetual obligation, speaking of the

abolition of the sabbaths, says, "They were designed to teach us to persevere in serving God the whole day, *all the time of our life*, and to foreshow that rest of God, his kingdom, in which, whoever has so persevered resting from his labours, will be made a partaker of God's table." In other places, he speaks of "the times of the kingdom, as the hallowed seventh day, the true sabbath of the righteous," which was to begin, as he thought, when the world lasted six days, that is, six thousand years. Iren. adv. Hares. Sometimes the Lord's day is spoken of, by the writers of that age, as being so superior to the sabbath, as entirely to have superseded it, and at other times, as being a type of the millenium and heavenly rest. Origen extravagantly contends that, as manna was rained from heaven on the Lord's day, and as there was none rained on the sabbath, from this fact the Jews ought to understand "that from that time, our Lord's day was set above the Jewish sabbath!"

By the small body of christians who, in modern times, have maintained the existing obligation of *the seventh day sabbath*, it has been supposed that their predecessors, the ancient sabbatarians, feeling themselves aggrieved by the edict of Constantine, which strictly enforced the observance of the first day of the week, while it made no provision for the seventh, retired, some into Abyssinia, and others into Piedmont, where they remained until the Reformation. Whatever may be in this, it is certain that the practice of observing Saturday as a festival, was very common in the Eastern churches, at the close of the fourth century: according to Augustin, (cited by Bingham,) this custom was then generally prevalent throughout the East, and the greater part of the christian world.

At this period, when it appears to have been customary to meet for worship and instruction both on Saturdays and Sundays, Athanasius, in defence of himself, for seeming to countenance the practice of judaizing, speaks of the day of the sabbath as being transferred to the Lord's day: it is manifest, however,

that though both days were at that time observed as festivals, they were regarded as being perfectly distinct: for there can be nothing more clearly attested than this, that the only day then known by the designation sabbath, was Saturday. Gregory, of Nyssa, remonstrates warmly with those who neglected to observe both the one and the other. "With what face," says he, "canst thou look on the Lord's day, who hast dishonoured the sabbath? Knowest thou not that these days are sisters, and that whosoever doth despise the one, doth affront the other?" When the observance of the Lord's day, and the numerous other festivals of the church became universally established, it was contended, that these festivals were holy, not merely on account of the services performed on them; but that in virtue of the power possessed by the church, they were invested with a greater sanctity than other days. It thus became customary to class all the greater festivals with the Lord's day, and to designate them *sabbath days*, being all regarded as consecrated *days of rest*. In what are called the apostolical constitutions, it was provided, that "servants were to rest from their labours on Christmas day, Epiphany, Passion and Easter weeks, Ascension day, Whitsunday, and *every Lord's day with the sabbath.*"

The obligation of the decalogue being recognized by the Roman Catholic church, the observance of the whole of these, and numerous other holy days was, by some, grounded on the fourth commandment; and it was maintained that to engage in any worldly business on such seasons, was a mortal sin. The number of days that were thus canonized, and spent in idleness, came at last to be felt to be a serious evil, by the Roman Catholics themselves; the Popes however persisted in increasing their number, canonizing days in honour of all who became liberal benefactors to the church; so that Fox, the Martyrologist, was provoked to complain that "they had cumbered the year with so many idle holydays, and the calendar with so many rascal saints, some of them, as good as ever were they that put Christ to death."

At the period of the Reformation, the early reformers on the Continent, as might have been expected, strenuously opposed the greater number of these saint days. In the confession, *drawn up by Melancthon*, at the Diet of Augsburg, to the question what we ought to think of the Lord's day, it is answered, that the Lord's day, Easter, Whitsuntide, and other such holy days, ought to be kept because they are appointed by the church, that all things may be done in order; but that the observance of them is not to be thought necessary to salvation, nor the violation of them, if it be done without offence to others, to be regarded as a sin. "For they who think the observance of the Lord's day has been appointed by the authority of the church instead of the sabbath, as a thing necessary, greatly err. The scripture allows that we are not bound to keep the sabbath; for it teaches, that the ceremonies of the law of Moses are not necessary after the revelation of the gospel. And yet because it was requisite to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when to assemble together, it appears that the church appointed for this purpose the Lord's day, which for this reason also, seems to have pleased the more, that men might have an example of christian liberty, and might know that *the observance neither of the sabbath nor of any other day is necessary.*" At the same period, similar views of the sabbath were advanced in this country, by the English reformers, Tyndal and Frith. "As for the sabbath," says the former, in his answer to Sir Thos. More, "we be lords over the sabbath, and may yet change it into Monday, or into any other day as we see need, or may make every tenth day holyday only, if we see cause why. Neither was there any cause to change it from the Saturday, but to put a difference between us and the Jews; neither need we any holy day at all, if the people might be taught without it." "Our forefathers, who where in the beginning of the church," says Frith, who wrote about three years later, "did abrogate the sabbath, to the intent that men might have an ensample of christian liberty. Howbeit because it was necessary that a day should be

reserved, in which the people should come together to hear the word of God, they ordained, instead of the sabbath, which was Saturday, the next day following, which is Sunday. And although they might have kept Saturday with the Jews as a thing indifferent, yet they did much better."

Such appear to have been the prevailing opinions respecting the sabbath, on the Continent and in England, at the early period of the Reformation. Owing, however, to the decalogue being still recognized by the reformers as in some sense the rule of human duty, the popish doctrine was by many retained, that the Lord's day, and all the other holy days, ought to be kept *as sabbaths*, in obedience to the fourth commandment. In the Book of Prayer set forth in the last year of Henry VIII., the fourth commandment is curtailed as follows: "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day," and in the General Confession, enumerating the violation of each of the commandments, that on the fourth states, "I have not sanctified *the holy days*, with works which be acceptable unto thee." When the commandments were added to the English Liturgy, the practice of enforcing the observance of all the holy days appointed by the church, by a reference to the decalogue, appears to have become very common: by those who did this, however, it was at the same time maintained, that "one day is no more holy than another; for that day is always the most holy in the which we most apply and give ourselves to holy works;" and along with this doctrine they held also, that as "the sabbath is a figure of that rest and quietness which they have that believe in Christ; it is meet, therefore, that faithful christians *on such days as are appointed for holy days*, should lay aside unholy works, and give them earnestly to religion and serving of God." In short, all the leading divines of that age, appear to have adhered to the original doctrine of the primitive church, namely, "that the sabbath was a type of the present spiritual rest enjoyed by the believer of the gospel, and of the eternal rest that is to come."

The reader, who attaches a greater degree of importance to the opinions of reformed churches, and of uninspired writers, than we feel disposed to do; and who may wish to ascertain the sentiments of several of the leading English divines, who flourished in the sixteenth and the early part of the following century, is referred to "Heylin's History of the Sabbath," and to "James's Sermons on the Sacraments and Sabbath;" from which works the principal contents of this note have been taken.

APPENDIX.

It is gratifying to have it in our power to remark, that though there has long prevailed a great diversity of opinion respecting the observance of a weekly day of rest, considered as a religious obligation, all parties seem cordially to unite in approving of the civil enforcement of a periodical intermission of public labour. Instead of it being desirable to procure a repeal of the statutes now in force, which enjoin an observance of Sunday, it is deserving of serious consideration, whether a revisal of the existing statutes, with a view to remedy their partial operation, and to increase, in various ways, their efficiency, would not be highly expedient. The provisions of these statutes, having principally a reference to the state of things which existed in the reign of Charles II., at which period the greater number of them were enacted, are wholly insufficient to meet the exigencies of modern times: owing in fact, to the change that has taken place in the value of money since the seventeenth century, and to various other causes, the penalties annexed to their violation, are now little better than a dead letter, being seldom carried into execution; or when they are, being enforced very partially, and usually on the poorer classes of society, by every case in which the law of the land upon the subject is carried into effect, there is conveyed the irritating and injurious impression, that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. It is obvious, that every municipal regulation like this, which interferes with personal liberty of action, ought to be founded on considerations of manifest public utility; and as all its provisions ought to have for their sole object, the

general welfare of the community, so ought they to be enforced with the strictest impartiality.

While we are far from intending to call in question the correctness of the opinion, that the periodical intermission of public labour is an expedient political regulation, we may be allowed to mention, that this opinion has, with numerous other true conclusions, been rested by many, on very fallacious grounds. "There is nothing lost to the community," says Paley, "by the intermission of public labour one day in the week. For in countries tolerably advanced in population, and the arts of civil life, there is always enough of human labour, and to spare. The difficulty is not so much to procure, as to employ it. The addition of the seventh day's labour to that of the other six, would have no other effect than to reduce the price. The labourer himself, who deserved and suffered most by the change, would gain nothing."[a]

This reasoning will hardly, we are disposed to think, bear a close examination. It is to be considered, that the price of labour in any country, does not depend *solely*, as Paley's premises assume, on the actual existing supply, but on the proportion which exists between that supply, and the means of setting it to work. These means consist in accumulated capital, and in the efficiency of labour in producing those commodities which the labourers consume. If these means were *to remain fixed*, it is certain, that by adding the seventh day's labour to the other six, the price of labour would be immediately lowered: and on the same supposition, it is not less certain, that by every fresh addition made to the existing number of labourers, (and it is well known, that such an increase is by the law of population, in this, and in every similarly situated country, constantly taking place,) the same consequences would inevitably follow. According to Paley's doctrine, therefore, the price of labour must necessarily undergo a gradual fall, correspondent to the gradual increase of population, so that in a very short time, it would be wholly

[a] Moral Philosophy, Book v. chap. 6.

inadequate to procure for the labouring classes the necessaries of life. Happily, the prospects of society, gloomy as some think they are, are not quite so gloomy as this. It has already been remarked, that the rate of wages does not depend solely upon the existing amount of the population, but is determined by the extent of the fund that exists for the maintenance of labourers, compared with the number of labourers to be maintained. It is obvious, that if the means of setting labour to work and of maintaining it, can be made to increase as fast as the population or supply of labour increases, the law of demand and supply, which determines the market price of labour, as well as of every other commodity, will keep up the price as infallibly at one rate of supply as at another. Although, therefore, the direct and temporary effect of adding a seventh portion of time to the existing supply of labour, would be to lower the price, it does not necessarily follow, that this would be the permanent result. Paley's proposition, that there is nothing lost to the community by the suspension of its productive industry one day in the week, is obviously incorrect: for it is incontrovertible, that by an addition of fifty-two days annually to the productive industry of the community, there would be an addition, somewhat correspondent, to its annual revenue and accumulated capital. Now, it is not less certain, that by the industry of the country being made one-seventh part more productive, there would naturally arise a beneficial reaction in favour of the price of labour; inasmuch as the demand for labour always increases with an increase of the revenue and accumulated capital of the country, and cannot in fact possibly increase without it.

It is no doubt very desirable, that labour should be kept up at such a price as will procure, for the labouring classes, a comfortable supply of the necessaries of life: this, however, can be accomplished in no other way but by increasing the annual revenue and stock of the community. The desirable matter, is to maintain a healthy proportion between the means of setting labour to

work, and the constantly advancing extent of the labouring population. It is manifest, that, while the productive industry of any country is suspended one day in seven, the law of population, which is increasing the supply of labour, (at a rate, for instance, in England and Wales alone, of five hundred souls daily,) continues to operate on that day the same as on any other. Now, as by employing the industry of the country *every day*, a seventh part would be added to the annual revenue of the country, and consequently to the means of setting labour to work, it is plain, that these means would keep pace more certainly with the natural increase of population than they otherwise would do, and that a favourable price for labour would eventually be more permanently obtained.

The ground on which Paley and others have usually rested the popular opinion of the expediency of a periodical cessation of public labour, viewed in this light, seems wholly untenable. Placed on other grounds, there is reason to think, that the opinion in question will, on examination, be found substantially correct. It is very questionable, whether an addition to the productive industry of the country, proportionate to the addition of a seventh portion of time, could, for any considerable length of time, be, with safety to the community, obtained. If man was a mere machine, that could be repaired when overwrought, like any other piece of machinery, it is evident, that by employing the whole population day and night, without any periodical intermission at all, the annual revenue of the country could be increased to an almost incalculable extent. Such an unremitting application, however, in any toilsome pursuit, would be wholly incompatible with the physical and moral well-being of the population, and would shortly produce the most disastrous results. At present, in the unhealthy occupations in which a considerable proportion of the labouring population of this country are employed, the duration of the period of labour allowed by law, is considered by many intelligent men, practically conversant with

the subject, to be much too long. According to a recent calculation, there are at least 8 or 10,000,000 of the population employed in manufactures, or subsisting indirectly by them. In the close and heated atmospheres, in which a great portion of this vast mass are confined, it is certain that unremitting application to their exhausting occupations, would speedily produce physical and moral evils of a nature for which no more rapid acceleration of national wealth could possibly compensate.

That there exists a necessity for some legislative enactment determining fixed days and hours of public labour, in order that the physical and moral well-being of society may be duly protected, is too obvious to require any formal proof. The natural and inevitable operation of commercial competition, of itself renders this imperiously necessary. It is the interest of every manufacturer who has capital invested in machinery, in buildings, and in the raw material which he manufactures, to produce as great a quantity of commodities for the amount of capital thus invested, as he possibly can; for, by increasing the production, he diminishes the interest of the capital he has laid out, and thus can afford his commodities at a lower price. Let us suppose the case of two manufacturers, who have each a capital of twenty thousand pounds invested in machinery of the same construction: the one works his manufactory six days in the week, and the other night and day the whole seven days; the latter, it is plain, by obtaining a greater return of commodities than the other, diminishes proportionately the rate of interest upon his outlaid capital, which is part of their actual cost, and is thus enabled to undersell his competitor in the market. The particular time a manufacturer is allowed to work his machinery, is immaterial to him as an individual, provided all his competitors are obliged to adhere to the same time: unless, however, a uniform time be fixed, and its observance enforced by a legislative enactment, the inducements which exist for one person to work his machinery longer than his competitors, would naturally lead to a gradual

encroachment on the periods of repose and relaxation possessed by the labouring classes, until their physical and moral condition became injured, to an extent wholly inconsistent with a prosperous or permanently secure state of society.

As it is the interest of the community at large, that the health and temporal well-being of the labouring classes be duly protected, it is manifest that the fixing of proper hours for public labour is a duty devolving on the civil legislature, the discharge of which it cannot neglect without entailing a lasting injury on the commonwealth. The apprehension that to restrict, by civil enactments, the time of public labour, is a violation of the principle, that all legislative interference in commercial concerns is impolitic, has been entertained, we think, without any sufficient grounds. The principle in question, however important and universally true, in reference to *the means of producing national wealth*, does not necessarily apply to *the means of securing the greatest happiness* of the community. In political economy, which relates purely to the production of wealth, the desirableness of every measure is, with much propriety, estimated by this standard alone: for it does not fall within the province of that science, to determine how far the different means of increasing the wealth of the state which it points out, may be found conducive in the long run, to the general well-being of society. To political science, however, it belongs, not only to ascertain by what means the national wealth can, with the greatest facility and rapidity, be increased, but also to provide, that all the means employed be compatible with public and permanent utility. Although, therefore, the accumulation of the wealth of this country could be greatly accelerated, by an addition to the hours and days of labour allowed by the existing laws, if this increase of wealth could be obtained, only by the sacrifice of the health and morals of the people, such an increase, instead of being a public good, would necessarily be a public evil. To the preservation of the health and comfort of the people, and the promotion of the general well-

being of the community, every means of expediting the accumulation of the capital of the country, ought undoubtedly to give place.

If, as seems very generally to be believed by those most conversant with the matter, a reduction of the period of labour at present allowed by law, would, under proper regulations, conduce greatly to the amelioration of the moral and intellectual condition of the labouring classes, the enforcement of such a reduction, so soon as the claims of the public expenditure admitted of the loss which the revenue would necessarily by the alteration sustain, would doubtless be an act of the truest political wisdom. As members of civil society, men must stand or fall together: all classes consequently are deeply interested in the prosperity of each other. If the great body of the people be allowed to continue poor and wretched, or to retrograde in civilization, the few who have attained a command over the conveniences and luxuries of life, can possess but a slender security for the permanent enjoyment of their privileges. Already, owing to the heavy pressure of taxation on productive industry, and to the superabundance of labourers compared with the means of employing and maintaining them, the bulk of the labouring classes in this country are forced, in order to procure a supply of the necessaries of life, to ply at their occupations with such unremitting application, as to preclude, in a great measure, the possibility of their being much raised in the scale of moral and intellectual improvement above their present low position. The demoralization and physical evils which have arisen from this unnatural state of things, have now assumed an aspect which no one, who has at heart the welfare of his country, can contemplate without entertaining serious apprehensions for the consequences. We are informed, that the hours of labour in cotton manufactories, generally extend from half-past five in the morning, till half-past seven or eight at night; with an intermission of only two hours altogether for meals. It is natural to expect that such a prolonged applica-

tion to an exhausting employment, in a heated atmosphere, must be attended with very injurious effects on the human frame. The consequences of these exhausting employments are not confined, it appears, to bodily health, but are equally injurious and distressing as it respects the physical and moral condition of the labourer. "When the operative returns home at night," says a late writer upon this subject, (who states that he is personally extensively engaged in manufactures,) "the sensorial power is worn out with intense fatigue; he has no energy left to exert in any useful object, or any domestic duty: he is fit only for sleep or sensual indulgence, the only alternations of employment which his leisure knows; he has no moral elasticity to enable him to resist the seductions of appetite or sloth; no heart for regulating his household, superintending his family concerns, or enforcing economy in his domestic arrangements; no power or capability of exertion to rise above his circumstances, or better his condition. He has no time to be wise, no leisure to be good; he is sunken, debilitated, depressed, emasculated, unnerved for effort, incapable of virtue, unfit for every thing but the regular, hopeless, desponding, degrading variety of laborious vegetation or shameless intemperance."[b] If this representation be correct, (and we are not aware that it is in any degree exaggerated,) there is reason to fear that the distressing state of things which it so vividly pictures, cannot long co-exist with the well-being, or even security of the community. If these evils, in fact, be allowed to accumulate, and to form the habits of the majority of the population, the employers must, in a short time, suffer as certainly as the employed: for, against the dangers which arise to the body politic from their existence, no political sagacity can reasonably be expected to provide. When society is once reduced to that ebb, that the mass of the population are generally debased, and wholly reckless about the consequences of their conduct; the security for life

[b] Enquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population, p. 31. Ridgway, 1831.

and property being necessarily impaired, the inducements which capitalists have to invest their stock in the employment of labour, are naturally diminished, and all the important ends which ought to attend the institution of civil government, become, in a great degree, unattainable. A superabundant population must, under such circumstances, rapidly and inevitably lead to a dissolution of the frame work of political society.

The wealth and well-being of this country, being now in a very considerable degree dependent on the capital and labour employed in manufactures, it comes to be a deeply important and interesting question, whether the evils that have been found to accompany their increase, be their necessary result; or whether, by a more judicious regulation of the hours of labour, and other remedial measures, these evils might not be mitigated or removed. On the consideration of this question, it would be unsuitable in this place to enter at any length; but we may be allowed to suggest in passing, that as the subject has a vast bearing on the prosperity of this country, the attention of the public mind cannot be too soon directed to its serious consideration. It is gratifying to notice, that those who are best qualified by practical knowledge to judge of the matter, are not without hope, that by the adoption of various palliative measures, a principal share of the evils in question might be avoided. On this one point, the testimony of experienced men seems remarkably to accord, namely, that of all the remedial measures that can be suggested, the reduction of the hours of labour is that on which the greatest stress is to be laid, inasmuch as the adoption of this remedy is absolutely essential to the success of every other.

Desirable, however, as this measure, both in itself and in its consequences, may be, it is not to be forgotten, that there exist serious impediments in the way of its adoption,—impediments which it is quite necessary to remove, before such a regulation could with safety be enforced. It is very plain, that even the present protracted hours of labour are not more than sufficient to

enable the great body of the people to earn the means of a comfortable subsistence. Unaccountable as, at first sight, it must to every intelligent and reflecting mind appear, so it is, that notwithstanding all the advantages arising from the surprising mechanical inventions of the present age, at no former period, perhaps, did it require greater manual exertion on the part of the body of the people, to procure the necessaries of life. As the inventions referred to have facilitated, in an extraordinary degree, the production of commodities, it is natural to think, that the necessaries of life ought to have become before this time, so plentiful, and cheap, as to be within the reach of the majority of the community, without any exhausting and injurious bodily labour being requisite. That with the immense productive power possessed by this country, a general diffusion of plenty *ought* to have existed, will, by no one who is acquainted with the means by which national wealth is produced, be called in question. To what cause then, must we attribute the absence of this abundance, and the necessity which still exists for the bulk of the population labouring for a livelihood, at the actual sacrifice of their physical and moral well-being? No doubt, the source of this evil is in some degree to be found in the absence of habits of forethought and prudential management on the part of the people themselves; but it is alike unfair and impolitic to attempt to conceal, that the principal cause of the necessity in question is, that heavy pressure of taxation on the necessaries of life, entailed upon the present generation by the wasteful wars, and extravagant system of government, carried on by this nation during the greater part of the last half century. Had it not been for the immense drafts made on the productive classes, during the whole of that period, it is little to be questioned, that long before this time, under a judicious and economical management of the country's resources, a competent supply of the means of subsistence would have been within the easy reach of every member of its industrious population.

The pressure of taxation on the necessaries of life, being the real cause of the present depressed state of public industry, it is manifest, that the sole remedy for the evil which can be expected to be efficient, is the gradual removal of this burden from the productive classes, and particularly, the speedy alleviation of its pressure on those who are least able to bear it. It ought ever to be borne in mind, that, as the labouring classes compose the great bulk of the community, a country can be said to be really prosperous or otherwise, only as these classes are well or ill supplied with the necessaries and conveniences of life: to the promotion of this end, therefore, the energies and resources of the country ought steadily to be directed. No civil community can correctly be said to be prosperous, or under proper management, in which the efficiency of labour in producing the commodities which the labourers consume, is not sufficient to supply the wants of every one who is able and willing to labour for a livelihood.

As, in order to afford an effectual relief to the existing distressed state of labour, it is requisite that there should be a gradual removal of the present pressure on the springs of public industry, every one who wishes well to his country, and who feels an interest in the amelioration of the condition of the labouring classes, must see it to be his duty, to advocate an economical management of the nation's resources. Without a repeal of those taxes which raise the price of provisions, and limit proportionately the market for the produce of labour, the population will inevitably advance too rapidly for the extent of the fund by which labour is employed; and that reduction of the hours of public labour, which is allowed to be so necessary to the protection of the health of the people, as well as essential to the success of all extensive and efficient plans for improving their moral and intellectual condition, must be abandoned as impracticable.

To secure an increase of the efficiency of labour, is thus the primary and principal object which it is desirable to see accomplished. If this object be attained, various important means of

advancing knowledge and civilization can with facility be put in operation;—without securing this end, no material alteration in the present protracted and demoralizing period of public labour, can with safety be adopted. Difficult as the attainment of the object mentioned no doubt is, we trust the ulterior purpose to which it is a necessary preliminary, and the collateral advantages that would attend its realization, are too important to be ever lost sight of by the enlightened philanthropists of this country. We may be allowed to remark, that we feel disposed to attach a more than ordinary degree of importance to the suggestion of a better regulation of the hours of public labour, on account of the increased facility which such an arrangement would afford for adopting efficient means for securing the education of the labouring classes. Of all existing national wants, we look upon this, namely, a proper system of public instruction maintained by the state, to be that, of which the community stands in the most urgent need. Unless indeed, some more efficient means of educating the people than those at present in operation be adopted, we conceive there can be no rational expectation entertained of the permanent well-being of this country. It is an incontrovertible fact, that notwithstanding the immense sums which have been annually levied on the industry of the nation, for the professed purpose of promoting the religious instruction of the public, up to this present hour, the education of the people, in the proper sense of the expression, has been wholly neglected. It is well known to all those who have given the subject any degree of attention, that the public teachers of religion, who have been so richly endowed by the state, for communicating instruction, have not reached more than a fraction of the labouring population: the fact indeed is becoming too palpable to be longer concealed from any one, that the great body of the people, who have needed instruction at the public charge most, have been hitherto allowed to grow up in all the grossness and ignorance of brutish barbarism. Not only in the dense population of large towns, has this popular ig-

norance and vice been springing up, and spreading its baleful influence on society:—recent events have in no unequivocal language told us, that in the agricultural districts, the condition of the labouring classes is still more deplorable. In these districts, says the Report of the British and Foreign School Society for the present year, "the most debasing ignorance prevails to an extent, which could not be credited, were it not verified by the closest investigation. The facts which have been elicited respecting the moral and intellectual state of those counties which have been disgraced by riots and acts of incendiarism, are truly affecting, and yet they are but a fair representation of the actual state of our peasantry. We call ourselves an enlightened nation, an educated people, and yet, out of nearly *seven hundred* prisoners put on trial, in four counties, upwards of *two hundred and sixty* were as ignorant as the savages of the desert—they could not read a single letter. Of the whole seven hundred, only *one hundred and fifty* could write, or even read with ease; and (in the words of one of the chaplains to the gaols,) "nearly the whole number were totally ignorant with regard to the nature and obligations of true religion."

It will be well if the danger with which the country has been threatened from this quarter, become the means of effectually arousing public attention to the consideration of the deeply important subject of the public instruction of the people. It is manifest, that whatever services of a private religious nature, the endowed teachers of religion may have rendered to that comparatively small section of society, whose religious opinions have allowed them to make use of these stipendiary spiritual ministrations; the present corporate body employed by the state, viewed as a public means of spreading useful knowledge, has proved an entire failure. "The authority of a church establishment," says one of the most enlightened among the modern advocates of such institutions, "is founded on its utility:" it is "a scheme of instruction," the single end of which is, "the preservation and

communication of religious knowledge."[c] Weighed in the balance of *general utility*, we apprehend the costly church establishment of England, considered simply as a means of communicating instruction, will be found greatly wanting. What great services to the body of the people, it may with propriety be asked, have been secured, by the immense portion of the public industry, that has been expended on this overgrown corporation? We certainly look in vain for any important *civil benefits* which *it* has conferred on the community: and it is to be remembered, that it is in men's civil character, and not at all in their religious opinions, that the commonwealth is interested. In as far as the advancement of society in the arts of civil life, and the promotion of that knowledge which qualifies men for the proper discharge of their duties as citizens, is concerned, it will be difficult, we think, to show that the expensive "scheme of instruction" at present employed by the state, has not been as *valueless* in its operation, as it is glaringly *unjust* in the means, by which it seeks and obtains public support. We assuredly envy not those, who are in duty bound to prove, that the state possesses *a right to compel men, as free citizens, to contribute to the propagation of religious opinions, to which, as individuals, they are conscientiously opposed.* Neither should we be in any wise anxious to have the somewhat onerous task imposed on us, of proving the *equity* of appropriating a considerable portion of the nation's industry to a religious object, in which, only an inconsiderable section of the community are interested! It is high time that the state should confine itself to its proper province, in providing for the *temporal well-being* of the people, and leave men to worship their Maker according to their own sense of religious duty. It is plainly the dictate alike of common sense and common equity, that those individuals who chuse to employ religious teachers, ought to pay them themselves, as they pay their own lawyers and phy-

[c] Paley's Moral Philosophy, Book vi, Chap. x.

sicians: it will be difficult to show, that the state possesses any better right to allocate a portion of the public revenue to such a private purpose as the remuneration of the teachers of a particular religious sect, than it would have to apply a portion of it to the support of certain physicians, who, it might be, were in various places, exclusively employed by the higher classes of society.

It has not been one of the least of the disadvantages that have attended the employment of the present religious establishment, as "a scheme of instruction," that confiding too implicitly to its operation, the public have been led to neglect the proper means of diffusing instruction altogether. It is every day, however, becoming more and more apparent, that the well-being of the commonwealth can have no other basis than the general education of the people; and we trust the day is not distant, when efficient means for securing this object, will be put into operation throughout the whole of the British Empire. It can scarcely be requisite to remark, that it is alike the interest and the duty of the state, to make a due provision, for ensuring a proper civil character among the whole body of the people. In free governments, where the people possess the liberty of practically expressing their political opinions, there can be no other security for the stability of the commonwealth, than the consent of the governed: and the procuring of this can be looked for, only from the diffusion of the knowledge, that all the members of the community are alike interested in the adoption of equitable laws, and in the strict and impartial enforcement of them. There is no instrument now to be confided in, for securing the obedience of the people, save that of the diffusion of political knowledge. Men, indeed, cannot possibly be good citizens, in the correct sense of the expression, until they are made acquainted with the foundation and objects of civil government; for without the possession of this knowledge, they can neither be expected to yield to the laws a steady obedience, nor to exercise, with requisite judgment, those political rights with which they may be entrusted. So long as the object pursued by any

government, is the correct one of *the good of the public at large*, there need be little apprehension entertained of the effects of popular influence, provided only, the population be duly qualified for the prudent exercise of the power they possess. That the people should be qualified for the appreciation and judicious exercise of their privileges, is manifestly an object, in which the whole community are interested. As men rise in the scale of civilization, they feel a growing sense of liberty of thought, and independence of character, which not only makes them more resolute and self-denying in resisting the enticements of corrupt influence, but also, more acute in detecting the covered designs of the selfish, and sophistical demagogue; as well as more temperate and impartial in the formation of their own political opinions.

Viewed therefore, purely as a matter of political expediency, the instruction of the rising race is a matter of such paramount importance, as it respects the permanent well-being of the state, that it must plainly be the interest of the community to provide for it at the public charge. The expense which would be incurred by instituting an efficient system of national instruction, when compared with the advantages accruing to society from its operation, is too inconsiderable to merit any particular consideration: so far indeed, from it entailing any serious additional expense on society, there are grounds for believing, that what any country saves by not employing a requisite number of schoolmasters and schools, it ultimately expends fourfold, in additional police, and bridewells, and gaols. A mere tithe of the immense portion of the productive industry of this country, hitherto allocated to the purpose of maintaining in splendour the endowed teachers of religion, would be more than sufficient to provide the elements of education for all the labouring classes of society.

"The education of the common people," says Adam Smith, "requires, perhaps, in a civilized and commercial society, the attention of the public, more than that of people of some rank and fortune. The parents or guardians of such, are generally sufficiently anxious

that they should acquire every accomplishment which can recommend them to the public esteem, or render them worthy of it.....It is otherwise with the common people. They have little time to spare for education. Their parents can scarce afford to maintain them even in infancy. As soon as they are able to work, they must apply to some trade, by which they can earn their subsistence. That trade too, is generally so simple and uniform, as to give little exercise to the understanding; while, at the same time, their labour is both so constant and so severe, that it leaves them little leisure, and less inclination to apply to, or even to think of any thing else.

But though the common people cannot, in any civilized society, be so well instructed as people of some rank and fortune; the most essential parts of education, however, to read, write and account, can be acquired at so early a period of life, that the greater part, even of those who are to be bred to the lowest occupations, have time to acquire them, before they can be employed in those occupations. For a very small expense, the public can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education.

The public can facilitate this acquisition, by establishing in every parish or district, a little school, where children may be taught for a reward so moderate, that even a common labourer may afford it; the master being partly, but not wholly paid by the public; because if he was wholly, or even principally paid by it, he would soon learn to neglect his business. In Scotland, the establishment of such parish schools, has taught almost the whole common people to read, and a very great proportion of them to write and account.....If, in those little schools, the books by which the children are taught to read, were a little more instructive than they commonly are; and if instead of a little smattering in Latin, which the children of the common people are sometimes taught there, and which can scarce ever be of any use to them,

they were instructed in the elementary parts of geometry and mechanics; the literary education of this rank of people would perhaps be as complete as can be. There is scarce a common trade, which does not afford some opportunities of applying to it the principles of geometry and mechanics, and which would not therefore gradually exercise and improve the common people in those principles, the necessary introduction to the most sublime, as well as to the most useful sciences.

The public can encourage the acquisition of these most essential parts of education, by giving small premiums and little badges of distinction, to the children of the common people who excel in them.

The public can impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring the most essential parts of education, by obliging every man to undergo an examination or probation in them, before he can obtain the freedom in any corporation, or be allowed to set up any trade, either in a village or a town corporate."[d]

Under a general system of tuition, constituted on this or some similar principle, it is obvious, that the elements of education might be placed within the reach of the whole population at a very inconsiderable expense: it is manifest also, that by the use of a few simple expedients, they could, in a certain sense, be *forced* on the reception of that portion of the rising race, who might be so debased in character, as to be unwilling to avail themselves of the advantages tendered them. By local or district schools being planted over the whole country, and in every quarter of our crowded towns, the most favourable opportunities would thus be afforded for training the people in those habits of industry, of forethought, and mental application, (habits which alone deserve the name of education,) that are so essential to individual success in life, as well as absolutely requisite for the due performance

[d] Wealth of Nations.—Book v Chap. i.

of those relative duties which devolve on men as members of civil society. Those who had arrived at an advanced stage of tuition, might with propriety be made acquainted with the elements of economical and moral science; and in this way correctly initiated in the knowledge *(to them* invaluable knowledge) of the causes which determine the rate of wages in any country, as also of the various circumstances on which the well-being of the labouring classes depends. Other branches of knowledge, it is obvious, might be taught them with much advantage: the specification of these, however,—the proper means of securing qualified preceptors,—the difference between teaching well, and teaching ill, and numerous collateral points, are topics of too extensive and important a nature, to admit of more than being alluded to in this place. We shall content ourselves with expressing it to be our well-weighed conviction, that unless some more efficient means than those hitherto employed in the instruction of the people be put in operation, so that the advantages of an education *suited* to men's respective circumstances in life, shall be extended to, and secured for every member of the community, no political measure, however good and important in itself, will ever raise this highly favoured country to that pitch of prosperity, to which its natural resources, its immense productive power, and the industry and enterprise of its people, are calculated to advance it. Nothing short of the adoption of a general system of public instruction, supported at the public charge, and founded on the broad principles of national utility, will ever remove the existing load of popular ignorance, and overtake the existing and growing wants of our densely-planted population.

THE END.

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